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the weekly
Standard

JANUARY 17, 2000

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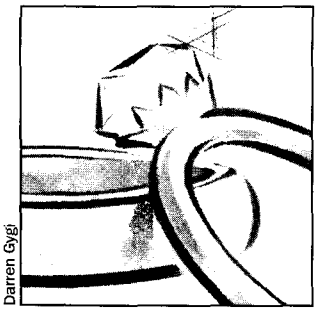

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the weekly Standard

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Panderer in Chief Gore

In the mad dash leftwards that the race for the Democratic nomination has become, Al Gore is proving to be a hard man to beat. A few weeks ago, he promised to overturn his own administration's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy to permit open homosexuality in the military. When Bill Bradley matched that commitment, Gore was determined to best him, and in last week's Democratic debate Gore made ending the gay ban a "litmus test" for selecting members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"I think that I would require those who wanted to serve on the Joint Chiefs to be in agreement with that policy," said Gore on Jan. 5. "I would insist before appointing anybody to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that that individual support my policy and, yes, I would make that a requirement."

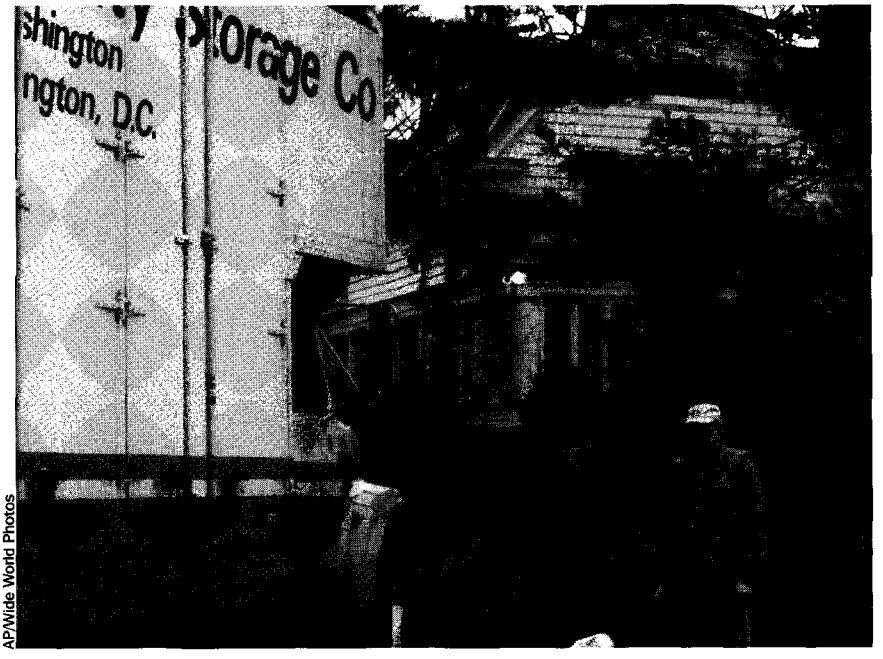
This is pretty mind-boggling. It's one thing to embrace a policy that every senior officer opposes as detrimental to the military's well-being. It's worse still to undercut the legal and prudential requirement that members of the Joint Chiefs give unvarnished military advice to both the president and Congress. The implication of Gore's statement is that military officers who wanted to serve on the Joint Chiefs would have to dissemble to get the job, something perhaps more corrupting of the military than the policy of gays-in-the-military itself.

Obviously, presidents can select senior military officers who are generally in tune with their policy goals; in his major defense speech last fall, George W. Bush threatened to fire senior commanders who would not work to implement his plans for transforming the military to meet new operational and technological challenges. These are the prerogatives of a commander in chief.

Gore's litmus test, though, reveals the kind of commander in chief he would be—one more concerned with pandering than fighting. Stating the obvious, Gen. Merrill McPeak, former Air Force chief of staff, told the *New York Times*, "Winning the nation's wars ought to be the primary qualification" for joint chiefs membership.

At a time when military preparedness has declined to the point where the majority of the chiefs now say they can no longer meet the requirements of American strategy, when U.S. troops are conducting three times the number of missions as during the Cold War, Commander in Chief Al Gore would turn the Joint Chiefs into the Village People and make "YMCA" the Marine Corps hymn. ♦

Moving Day



AP/Wide World Photos

Last Tuesday, Jan. 4, the Clinton moving van (left) pulled up in Chappaqua, N.Y., at the new official residence of Hillary Clinton, Senate candidate, bringing to an end the "buy one, get one free" era. As is customary with the Clintons, the event was heavily spun. Everyone officially referred to it as "the Clintons'" new house. A press availability was hastily arranged with both Clintons, lest anyone get the idea that Mrs. Clinton was, in a sense, leaving. The president waxed expansive on the joys of unpacking "their" furniture. "We've been boxing things up," he said, "and figuring out what to leave here, what to move there. It's been a rather interesting challenge over the holidays, but I've enjoyed it very much."

Yes, THE SCRAPBOOK imagines that he has. ♦

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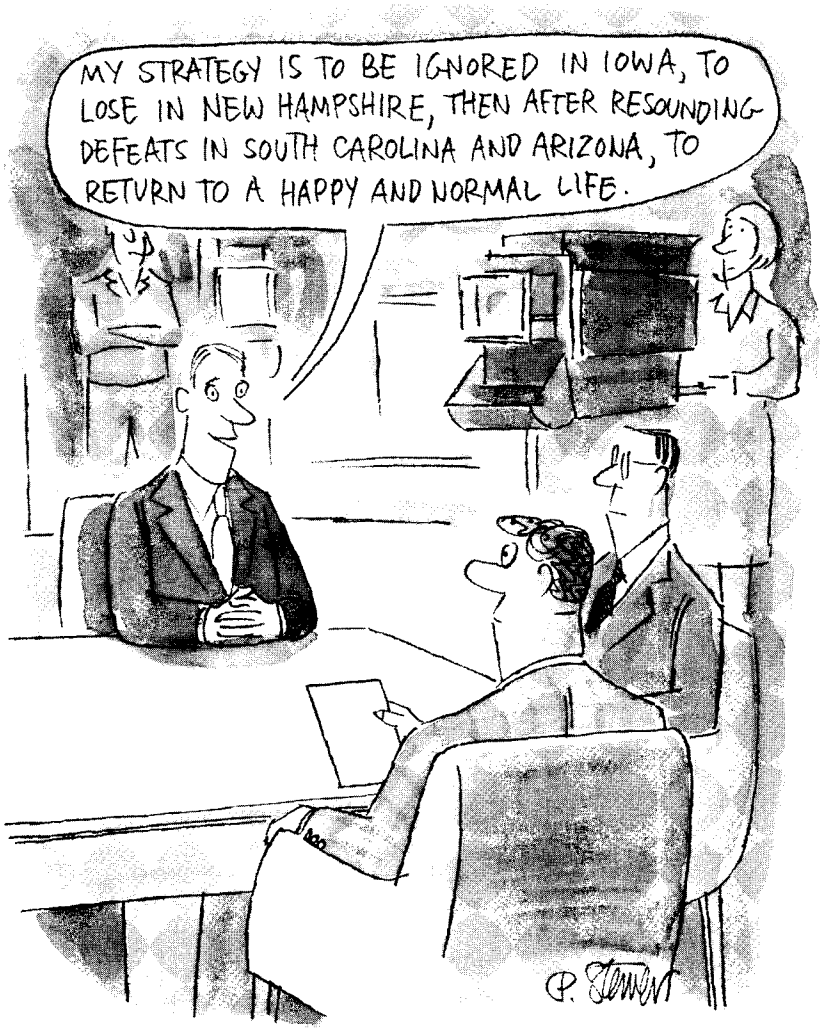

Off Her Rocker

John Rocker, meet Donna Brazile. Why not? The two have much in common—the same intellectual expansiveness, the same tolerance for diversity of views, the same willingness, as they might say, to "reach out."

As official manager of Vice President Gore's presidential campaign, Ms. Brazile is the less known of the two, though if she keeps it up she'll be a household name in no time. Last week, Brazile gave a revealing interview on the subject of race and politics to the news service Bloomberg.com. "Republicans," she thoughtfully observed, "bring out Colin Powell and J.C. Watts because they have no program, no policy. They play that game because they have no other game. They have no love and no joy. They'd rather take pictures with black children than feed them."

Reaction from Powell and Watts was swift. Both sent outraged letters to Gore, who issued limp statements of praise for Powell in hopes of calming the general down. Gore will likely have to do much more of this, so long as he keeps Brazile around the office. Less noted, in the same interview, were the campaign manager's comments about gay rights. Referring to the gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard, who was beaten to death in late 1998, she said: "Remove all barriers. If we have to tear down the legal structure to give gays and lesbians full equality and freedom, then let's do it."

Someone might want to ask the vice president precisely what "legal structure" his campaign manager wants to tear down. It should make an interesting plank in the Democratic platform. ♦

The Wit of the Family

With her language dial set to "Academic-ese," Ernestine Schlant Bradley, wife of Bill, recently explained why you shouldn't go by first impressions: "You can't judge a text by a first reading." Yes, and remember also to never deconstruct a book by its cover. ♦

Sorry

This was no doubt bound to happen once THE SCRAPBOOK started making fun of corrections in other publications: An article in our most recent issue ("Three Cheers for Russian Democracy," January 3/January 10, 2000) got badly scrambled. The piece can be read in its entirety on THE WEEKLY STANDARD's website, www.weeklystandard.com. Or readers can piece together the original as follows: After the article's first column of text on page 15, jump to the top of page 17. At the end of page 17, return to the second and third columns of type on page 15. From there, the story continues on page 18.

Abject apologies to readers and to author Leon Aron. ♦

E-mail The Scrapbook

THE SCRAPBOOK is now reachable 24/7. To paraphrase Alice Roosevelt Longworth, if you don't have anything nice to say, e-mail it to Scrapbook@weeklystandard.com. ♦

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Casual

Dear Editor

Each morning, when the *New York Times* arrives, after checking the obituaries, I go right for the letters to the editor. What I am looking for is a man or woman after my own heart: someone publicly announcing a heterodox opinion that is courageously, elegantly congruent with one of mine. I am searching for people, in other words, whose perceptions are as subtle, whose cast of mind as impressively independent, whose intelligence quite as radiant as my own.

Occasionally I find them. Such a person is Sheila Feit, of Syosset, New York, who nicely blasts a *New York Times* writer for fearing technology, then adds that she has "chosen from the beginning not to spend much time online, to play computer games or to use the computer for daily activities," and adds further that, though she wrote her letter in longhand, she is sending it by e-mail. Another is V.A. Carney, of Stowe, Vermont, a black American, who feels it "a supreme insult to any decent, fair-minded black American" to suggest that blacks "should be held to lower ethical standards because they cannot comport themselves properly." Can you see my fist come down, my thumbs go up, my little touchdown dance commence?

Someone who does not qualify is Walter Cronkite, the man with a face only a nation could love, who recently bestirred himself to allow that he feels all presidential candidates "could show true leadership by agreeing to one or more genuine debates to set forth their foreign policy." And since you'll never guess why, I'll let Walter, the old clichémeister himself, tell you: because "foreign policy has never been more important to the future of the United States and the world." Do you suppose he knocked off for the rest of the day after squeezing out that brilliant missive?

A good letter to the editor should never, Cronkitically, pontificate. It should instead show anywhere from mild to entirely out-of-control exasperation. On his television talk show, Steve Allen used to put on his hat and shift into the highest possible dudgeon to read angry letters from the New York *Daily News*, doing a man who had had it up to here (just above

Darren Gygi

the eyebrows, I believe), was ticked to the max, wasn't going to take it anymore, was being driven just short of insane and maybe a little beyond.

Not all letters to the editor need be angry, or take on the burden of straightening everyone else out. Some of the best provide a charming addendum. I once wrote an essay titled "I Like A Gershwin Tune" that elicited a lovely letter from a man who told an anecdote illustrating the genuine modesty of Ira Gershwin, to whom it never occurred to use his own celebrity to acquire a reservation at a crowded restaurant. I almost wish someone other than I had written the Casual on acknowledgments in books in these pages a few weeks ago, so that I could send in an addendum letter having to do with an author acknowledging himself, as Philip Horne, in his *Henry James: A Life in Letters*, does for his use of a Henry James letter that he happens to own: "Only one of these letters is in a private collection; I thank myself for my permission to publish it."

One way of judging a magazine is by the quality of the letters it prints. Magazines that print letters in praise of themselves ought to be distrusted. Any magazine with intellectual pretensions ought to garner letters that are disputatious and probably tendentious. The etiquette is to allow the writer under attack to answer all such letters; and if he is any good at polemic, he will usually be able to apply to his unhappy correspondent the intellectual equivalent of the Cobra Twist, a hold devised and applied by the former wrestler Cyclone Anaya—a combined half nelson and reverse leg twist—that left his opponents briefly writhing before falling unconscious to the mat.

Like the Manhattan attorney who, when asked whether he had ulcers, answered, "No, but I give them," I do not now write letters to the editor but answer them. Many moons ago I had a man named Edwin R. Newman, the television broadcaster and self-appointed language expert, stalking me in the letters columns of intellectual magazines. I did my best to greet each of his letters with a smile and a karate chop, until, finally, he desisted. Long before that, living in the South, I wrote an occasional letter to the *Arkansas Gazette*, arguing with the foreign policy of President Charles de Gaulle. Odd, but he never answered.

Letters to the editor in too great number can weary a writer. Dying of cancer, Lucy Dawidowicz, the historian of the Holocaust, when handed the printed version of what she knew to be her last article for *Commentary*, remarked on her deathbed to Norman Podhoretz that, while she didn't especially look forward to death, "At least I won't have to answer the letters from readers." A great woman, I think. Wish I had thought to write a letter to the editor to say that.

Joseph Epstein

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Correspondence

The Columbine Tapes

Don't we all wish to forever forget the names of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold ("Columbine, Again," Dec. 27)? J. Bottum suggests that we should permanently cleanse our minds of the two boys that terrorized Columbine High School, mainly to cease the continued media coverage, and with it, the desired notoriety they so desperately crave. Fine, I'm all for it. But is it that easy? Maybe we should call them X and Y? I do see Bottum's point, but let's be serious. Those tapes needed to be investigated and exposed—not to give those boys another day in the limelight, but because we can't ignore what they were thinking. And certainly, we can't ignore them.

All media outlets today struggle with the fine line of needed coverage versus saturation and overexposure. Where are the boundaries? Unfortunately, the horrific tragedy of Columbine was so wrenching it warranted an hourly rate of press coverage. And unfortunately, the crime was so heinous it crystallized national concerns greater than just the sick state of mind of two attention-starved teenagers. In the few weeks following the tragedy, media sources inundated viewers with an assortment of shows focusing on cause-and-effect issues such as gun control, the decline of the American family, and the influence of Hollywood (among others). Frankly, they were some of the most constructive "talk show" forums in recent memory. Now, presidential campaign coverage has put most of the important social issues relative to Columbine on the back burner.

Bottum isn't suggesting that we forget Columbine—just Harris and Klebold. Is that a realistic means of preventing others from committing similar acts? Prior media coverage of similar crimes, as well as Columbine, killed that wish. And it's too late for the media to correct their ways. Why not instead use Harris and Klebold as extreme examples of what has happened to certain aspects of our society—such as the fragmentation of the American family, the negative influence of movies and television, and the easy accessibility of automatic weapons, just to name a few?

Rob Lamoree
Richmond, VA

J. Bottum notes that the story of Cassie Bernall as Columbine's martyr may be in doubt. It may have been Valeen Schnurr who said she believed in God, Bottum notes. Forgotten, Bottum complains, is the larger truth "that at least one Colorado high-school girl affirmed her faith, and was killed."

Fortunately, however, Valeen Schnurr was not killed. She affirmed her faith and lived. This may not conform with the message that some wish we would take from the Columbine tragedy. But it does not serve the interests of people of faith to elevate myth over truth, however perfect the myth may be.

Michael Nadel
Arlington, VA

Your Dec. 27 editorial blames "the Denver sheriff's department" and "Denver authorities" for letting a *Time* magazine reporter see the videotapes made by Columbine High School killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

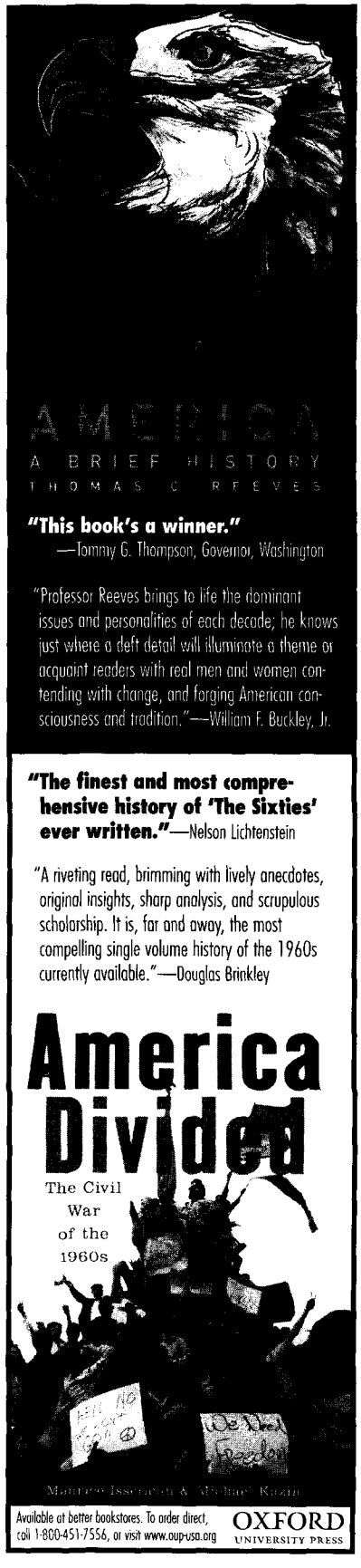
However, Columbine High School is not in Denver. It's not even in Littleton; it is in unincorporated Jefferson County, and the official responsible for showing the videotapes to *Time* magazine is Jefferson County sheriff John Stone. As it happens, Denver, which is a coterminous city and county, does not even have a sheriff.

Linda Seebach
Denver, CO

Therapeutic Justice

I will first admit a modicum of balance in Eric Cohen's article, "The Drug Court Revolution" (Dec. 27, 1999). After all, toward the end of the article he does cite several eminent conservatives who have had good things to say about drug courts. Having said that, Cohen's overreaching does not assist the conservative cause.

As a former assistant public defender in Rochester, New York, I had the privilege of spending six months as the assistant public defender assigned to the Rochester Drug Treatment Court during my four-year tenure with the public defender's office. The Rochester Court was one of the first drug courts in the country, perhaps one of the first 12 which Cohen references in his article.



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Cohen is certainly correct in portraying drug courts as a type of "therapeutic jurisprudence." The emphasis is on rehabilitation, with the expectation that a hoped-for permanent sobriety (a year's continuous clean-time/sobriety was required for graduation in Rochester) will eliminate future criminal behavior, which had heretofore been fueled by drug addiction. As Cohen stated, when defendants relapse and lie about it, sanctions are swift and drastic (if one considers a week in jail drastic). In fact, many people who participate in drug court, unsuccessfully or not, often end up spending more time in jail over the long haul than they would otherwise if, for example, they just accepted a bargaine for 90-day jail sentence on a misc meanor possession charge. That syste has proven a revolving-door failu Hence, drug courts.

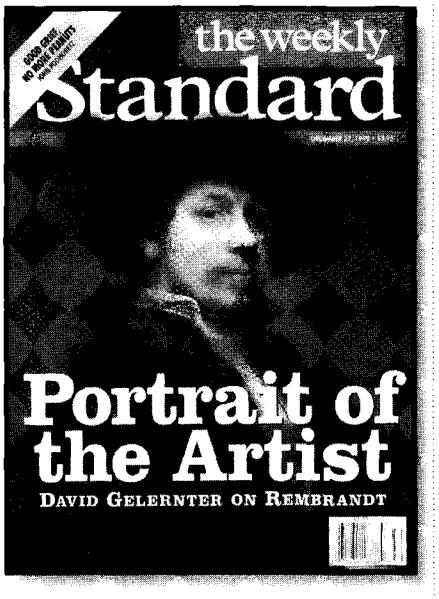
Cohen overreaches, and discredits t conservative cause, when he states wi out support, "the fact is that the m passionate advocates for drug courts ha a thoroughgoing contempt for 'traditic al justice.' . . .They see drug courts as t first step in the transformation of t courts into a wholly therapeutic ent prise. They want to expand the therap tic model to cases of domestic violen larceny, prostitution, and even rap Says who? Cohen, as far as I can tell.

I've never heard the most ardent su porter of drug courts utter such nc sense. First, it would be politica impossible, at least on a large scale; I ju don't see therapeutic "rape courts" cropping up anytime soon in this country. Second, whereas rape, for example, involves a victim and is motivated by something far more sinister and dangerous to the community, drug possession and use is a "victimless" crime, which is precisely why 400 courts all over the country have seen fit to give the drug-court method a try.

Finally, while Cohen is concerned, as I am, that too much of modern therapy avoids moral judgments and teaching, Alcoholics Anonymous, which is the basis of all of the various 12-step groups which drug court participants utilize, does not shy away from moral education. Anyone who has ever simply thumbed through the A.A. "Big Book" cannot help but realize that it was written from a Christian "sinner in need of redemption" premise.

FRANK T. PIMENTEL
Arlington, VA

ERIC COHEN RESPONDS: I think Mr. Pimentel may underestimate the revolutionary ambitions of "therapeutic jurisprudence." Just a few examples: In a July 1999 article in the *National Institute of Justice Journal*, David Rottman and Pamela Casey describe the "traditional model" of American justice as "adversarial," "backward looking," and unresponsive to "justice, rights, and equality issues." They want to replace traditional justice with an "ethic of care perspective"



that focuses on the "needs" of the "client." This revolutionary approach—as drug court professionals proudly call it—has already taken hold in Washington, D.C., Florida, and Hawaii, which have created therapy courts for domestic violence offenders. Likewise, special "mental illness courts" have sprung up across the country. This latter fact, in light of the recent surgeon general's report declaring that half of all Americans suffer some form of mental illness in their lifetime, one quarter in any given year, suggests that the therapeutic state is not a "political impossibility" but an accelerating fact. To stand against it—or at least approach revolutions like drug court with skepticism—is not a "discredit to the conservative cause" but a prudent application of conservative principles.

A TAXING PROBLEM

THE PROBLEM of expansionary state taxes goes well beyond the issue, described in Edmund Walsh's article, of applying sales taxes to online purchases ("Sales Tax: The Next Generation," Dec. 27). For years, the cost of taxes collected by state and local governments has resembled a hot Internet stock—up, and up, and then up some more.

The governors who are clamoring for new taxing authority often claim that their treasuries fail to capture a fair share of the growing economy. In fact, state and local tax collections have outpaced economic growth in the past decade. nsus figures show, for instance, that ıte tax collections alone jumped by 20 billion from 1993 to 1998, to a total $475 billion. On a per capita basis, that ɔwth amounted to 28 percent—significantly more than inflation. Spending by te and local governments combined is w greater than all non-defense expenures by the federal government.

Higher state taxes were driven, in ge part, by an explosion in Medicaid ending. State attorneys general across e country sued tobacco companies for lions of dollars in the mid-1990s, argug that the taxpayers deserved to be paid. But now that the states are colting billions of tobacco windfall dols, hardly any of those dollars are actuy going back to taxpayers. Most will be ent, instead, on bigger government.

ROBERT B. WARD
Albany, NY

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the weekly Standard

The End of Marriage?

Where are they when they're needed, all of our allegedly pro-family politicians? Two weeks ago, the Vermont supreme court handed down the incredible ruling that marriage violated the state's 1793 constitution. With that decision, the long-simmering theoretical argument over rights for homosexuals exploded into immediate practical urgency. Gary Bauer and Steve Forbes objected, but, so far as we can tell, all of the leading candidates for president promptly went silent.

The Vermont court ordered the state legislature to confer on cohabiting homosexuals all the rights and privileges it extends to married men and women. The court offered the legislature the option of avoiding the word "marriage"—it proposed the euphemism "domestic partnership" instead—but it insisted that whatever names were used, the thing itself had to be the same.

With the action of the Vermont supreme court, the long-anticipated legal crisis of the American family has arrived, and it has arrived nationwide.

When Hawaii's supreme court attempted a similarly reckless adventure in 1996, the state's voters amended their constitution to slap the court down. But Vermont's constitution is extraordinarily difficult to alter (an amendment must originate in the state senate, requires four separate legislative votes spaced over four years, must be signed by the governor, and only then goes to the people for their approval) and so the court's decision is likely to remain law for some time. Which means, despite the "domestic partnership" alias, that gay marriage has for the first time been foisted on an American state.

For the first time, but not the last. Given the subtle interworkings of the American federal system—and also given the not-at-all subtle bias of the American legal class against family and marriage—the Vermont ruling is a clear and present danger to marriage everywhere in the country. Even very liberal courts have thus far hesitated to impose gay marriage on their own states. But Vermont has now offered such courts a means to smuggle gay marriage past their legislatures and voters, and in a way not easily corrected by a constitutional amendment.

New Jersey, for example, may be afflicted with the most liberal judiciary in the country. Its ability to do harm has been constrained by a state constitution with an effective amending formula. But what happens when a homosexual with a rich Vermont-domiciled partner defaults on a debt in New Jersey? Can the New Jersey courts be trusted to pass up such a glittering opportunity to import gay marriage into their state?

What happens when a Vermont homosexual is hit by a car in Massachusetts, and his partner demands to be recognized as the next-of-kin? Can the Massachusetts courts really be expected to deny this recognition?

Suppose a husband and wife divorce in New York and agree that the wife should have custody of their children. She now moves to Vermont, takes up with a woman, and enters into a partnership. Her husband sues, charging that the wife has created an unsuitable home environment for the children by entering into a non-marital cohabitation. The wife denies that the home is unsuitable: By Vermont standards, she has remarried. Will the New York courts deny it?

The 1996 federal Defense of Marriage Act will quickly prove to be flimsy protection against the potential for legal mischief created by the Vermont court. The Defense of Marriage Act permits the courts and legislatures of the other 49 states to ignore Vermont homosexual partnerships. But it does not prevent courts and legislatures from recognizing such partnerships as marriages if they so choose, and under the pressure of legal conundrums like those above, one or more of the 49 is bound to crack.

In other words, the long-anticipated legal crisis of the American family has arrived, and it has arrived as a nationwide crisis. And yet, the would-be leaders of the nation have shockingly little to say about it. Vice President Al Gore issued a brief statement on the day of the

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ruling applauding the result while clumsily attempting to reassure traditionalists. "I am not for changing the institution of marriage as we have traditionally known it. But I am for legal protections for domestic partnerships." Bill Bradley also claims to oppose (or, as his campaign materials cautiously put it, "not support") gay marriage. But he has chosen to duck the Vermont issue altogether. Ditto for John McCain: The otherwise voluble candidate has apparently said not one word about the decision in Vermont. George W. Bush contented himself with a brief answer to a journalist's question about the case: "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman."

This won't do. Merely stating your support for the law as it existed yesterday does nothing to protect the country from the legal threat it faces today. When the Supreme Court of one of the sovereign states ruled that it could find no "reasonable and just basis" for upholding the constitutionality of the institution of marriage, it posed a legal challenge—and a moral challenge—to the whole nation. This is not the first time that the challenge has been posed: In the series of court cases that challenged Congress's authority to suppress polygamy in the Utah Territory, the federal courts recognized, as Justice Mathews ruled in the 1885 case of *Murphy* v. *Ramsey*, that "no legislation can be supposed more wholesome and necessary in the founding of a free, self-governing commonwealth, fit to take rank as one of the co-ordinate states of the Union, than that which seeks to establish it on the basis of the idea of the family, as consisting in and springing from the union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony; the sure foundation of all that is stable and noble in our civilization; the best guaranty of that reverent morality which is the source of all beneficent progress in social and political improvement." The federal government cannot and should not exert the same authority over Vermont, a state, as it did over Utah, then still a territory. But if Vermont's revolution is to be contained and corrected, national lawmakers and leaders must articulate their reasons for rejecting it and their plans for mitigating the damage it will do.

Advocates of same-sex partnership like to point out that civilizations have experimented with many forms of sexual and family organization. That's true of course—just as it's true that civilizations have experimented with many forms of political and economic organization. What Americans have understood until now, however, is that heterosexual monogamy is the only form of sexual organization consistent with republican self-government. Anything else, as the Supreme Court observed in 1890, tends to "destroy the purity of the marriage relation, to disturb the peace of families, to degrade woman, and to debase man."

The first effects of that debasement are already becoming visible. How often have we heard in the past two weeks that the defense of marriage is the moral equivalent of the defense of segregation? Doesn't anybody stop to ponder the horrific trivialization of the evil of segregation implied by this analogy?

But there is plenty more debasement still to come. Same-sex partnerships are a large and decisive step toward the replacement of marriage with a new system of temporary, fluctuating unions that elevate the wishes of adults over the welfare of children. In order to treat same-sex and opposite-sex relationships equally, the new unions will have to be sex-blind: The law will no longer be permitted to take into account the distinctive connections between mothers and children and the special vulnerabilities of women in marriage. Again in order to treat same-sex and opposite-sex unions equally, the new partnerships will have to accept children as a marketable commodity, and to accommodate the alarming new trend toward the purchase and sale of sperm, eggs, and wombs. One of the very first arguments put forward against a federal ban on human cloning was that the ban would threaten the reproductive freedom of homosexuals.

The family is where we learn to be human and to be citizens. Discarding the family in favor of something new will change the meaning of both humanity and citizenship. This is about as large a political issue as there could be. Is it really possible that none of the leading contenders for the presidency is large enough to address it?

—David Frum, for the Editors

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Meet Al's New Attack Dogs

The Gore team has the best and the brightest of Democratic hatchet men. BY MATTHEW REES

ASKED AT THE JANUARY 5 debate in New Hampshire whether any of his positions had been misrepresented by Al Gore, Bill Bradley cited one "particularly offensive" example: Gore's criticism of the Bradley health care plan as racially insensitive to African Americans.

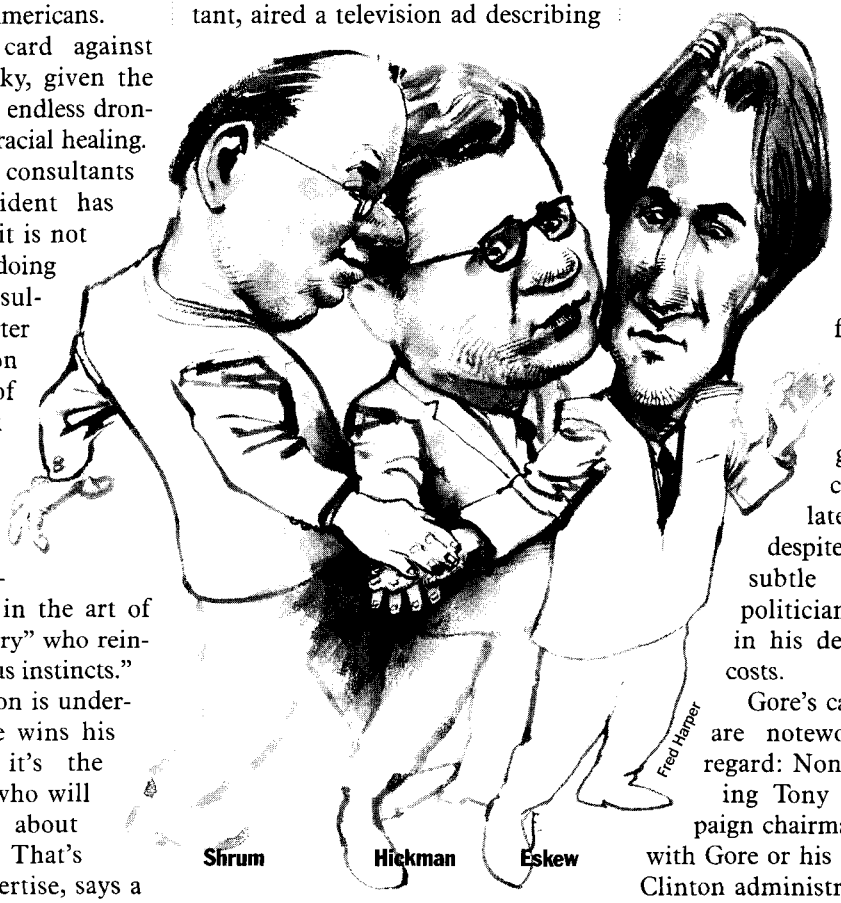
Playing the race card against Bradley is awfully risky, given the retired basketball star's endless droning about the need for racial healing. But considering the consultants whom the vice president has hired in the last year, it is not surprising that Gore is doing just that. These consultants—Bob Shrum, Carter Eskew, and Harrison Hickman—are three of the most vicious attack dogs in Democratic party politics. The *Washington Post* recently described them as "trench warriors . . . well-versed in the art of political thrust and parry" who reinforce Gore's "pugnacious instincts."

Bradley's exasperation is understandable, but if Gore wins his party's nomination, it's the Republican nominee who will really need to worry about Gore's hired guns. That's because their true expertise, says a GOP media consultant, is not in attacking other Democrats but in "making Republicans look like they want to kill old people and starve children."

Don't believe it? Consider the experience of Ellen Sauerbrey.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

In 1998, she was the Republican candidate for governor in Maryland. Entering the final two weeks of the campaign she had a good chance of defeating the incumbent Democrat, Parris Glendening. That's when Shrum, Glendening's media consultant, aired a television ad describing her as possessing "a civil rights record to be ashamed of," based on her vote against a civil rights bill in the state legislature. Just to make things clear, the ad featured three sad-faced blacks and an urban mural of Africa.



Republicans quickly cried foul, and they weren't alone. So egregious was Shrum's ad—the civil rights bill in question related to sexual harassment, not race, and was actually killed by Democrats—that even Kurt Schmoke, the black Democratic mayor of Baltimore, condemned it publicly. He would not, he said, "participate in a campaign to try to persuade people that she [Sauerbrey] is a racist." *Campaigns & Elections*, a magazine that tracks political consultants, in a backhanded compliment, called the ad the "Most Brutally Effective Attack Spot" of 1998.

With Shrum and company playing such prominent roles in the Gore campaign, the race-baiting to which Bradley has already been subjected could look like child's play by the end of the primaries. "These guys are body punchers," says Bob Beckel, Walter Mondale's 1984 presidential campaign manager. "They don't shy away from confrontation. They're very aggressive." That Gore has settled on this group to lead his campaign is just the latest reminder that, despite his reputation as a subtle policy-minded politician, he is Clintonian in his desire to win at all costs.

Gore's campaign personnel are noteworthy in another regard: None of them, including Tony Coelho, the campaign chairman, has any history with Gore or his issues. One former Clinton administration official sympathetic to Gore describes the situation like this: "It's the most important moment in Al Gore's political career, and when he looks to his inner circle for advice he's looking at a bunch of strangers."

Indeed, Gore has jettisoned a number of his old political advisers in favor of campaign aides who in the past worked against him. Shrum,

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Donna Brazile, and Terry McAuliffe all worked for Dick Gephardt in 1988. Raymond Strother, a former Gore consultant, told the *New Yorker* recently that this approach is vintage Al. "He's always switching around, looking for miracles, looking for a silver bullet. Somehow, he always manages to give the public impression that the consultants are in control."

None of this would matter, of course, if the campaign had gone as expected, in which case Gore would be walking away with the nomination right about now. Rather, he's in the middle of a dogfight against a surprisingly strong opponent. And instead of having a team of old hands behind him, the vice president is unfamiliar with his own top advisers. A number of Democratic operatives cite this as a primary reason why Gore's campaign has experienced so many fits and starts.

The first clue that Gore recognized something was seriously awry came in July, when he hired Carter Eskew to serve as one of his top media advisers. Eskew had been out of politics since 1995 and so was an unusual choice, even though Gore has known him, unlike several other of his top advisers, since the '70s when they were both working for a Nashville newspaper. In other ways, hiring Eskew seemed a smart move, as Eskew had been the golden boy of Democratic media consultants throughout the '80s and early '90s, possessing an ability to "capture the message and visualize it better than anybody," according to Brian Lunde, a former executive director of the Democratic National Committee. In 1988, Eskew was so successful in destroying Pete Dawkins, a dazzling Republican candidate for the Senate from New Jersey, that the *Washington Post* featured him in a lengthy post-election article entitled "The New Political Bosses."

In the 1992 general election, Eskew worked closely with Mandy Grunwald to produce ads on behalf of the Clinton campaign. But after a string of losses in 1994—not a good year for Democratic candidates—he withdrew from politics and devoted himself to corporate consulting for the Bozell Sawyer Miller Group.

By 1999, the golden boy had gained a lot of baggage. Eskew's most celebrated corporate work had been carried out on behalf of the leading tobacco companies in an ad campaign against anti-tobacco legislation sponsored by John McCain. Eskew crafted aggressive television spots, lambasting the bill as an example of Washington's having "gone cuckoo again," while warning that "the politicians in Washington are voting to destroy our way of life."

McCain's bill eventually died, thanks in no small part to Eskew's ads. Thus it was widely interpreted as a sign of desperation and hypocrisy when Gore, who devoted his 1996 speech at the Democratic convention to the evils of tobacco, recruited Eskew to take a senior post in his campaign.

Instead of having a team of old hands behind him, Gore is unfamiliar with his own advisers, none of whom has worked for him before.

Eskew also brought to the campaign a long-standing feud with Gore's other top media consultant, Robert Squier. The feud was played out in the press, culminating in a now-famous *New York Times* interview in which Squier accused Eskew of having engaged in "deeply unprofessional behavior" in the past and said he had "no idea" how the two of them could work together on the Gore campaign. Squier is no longer a presence within the campaign.

Eskew shares with Gore's other consultants a knack for making life miserable for Bradley. But distinguishing him within the campaign is his long personal history with Gore. It's said Eskew is the only person on the campaign who regularly calls Gore by his first name, and the only one with the standing to criticize the candidate honestly. Thus Eskew helped Gore appreciate over the past six months how much trouble he was in. And when Gore unilaterally decided to move the campaign headquarters to Nashville, the first aides to be told were Eskew and Coelho.

One of Eskew's early moves was to bring Shrum into the Gore campaign, and it's easy to see why. Shrum is highly regarded as a wordsmith, having written Ted Kennedy's stirring address to the 1980 Democratic convention. In the Clinton years, he's drafted a number of State of the Union speeches, and he even submitted a draft apology for Clinton to deliver about the Lewinsky affair, but it was rejected as excessively contrite.

Shrum is also a skilled tactician. It was his idea to have Gore offer to give up all television ads in exchange for twice-a-week debates, a proposal that has proven surprisingly popular. And, as the Sauerbrey example showed, Shrum can be ruthless in the heat of a campaign. The *New York Times* has described him as a "Democratic war horse known for attacking the opponent."

In 1990, for example, Shrum worked for an opponent of Ann Richards in Texas's Democratic primary for governor. He produced a television ad asking whether Richards, a recovering alcoholic, had ever used "marijuana or something worse like cocaine, not as a college kid but as a 47-year-old elected official sworn to uphold the law?" There was never any substantiation for the charge, and Richards won the primary.

In 1998, Shrum aired an ad against Paul Coverdell, a GOP senator from Georgia, featuring a woman who'd lost her daughter in childbirth. The ad all but accused Coverdell of being responsible for the death because he didn't support giving patients the right to sue their HMOs. Coverdell prevailed, but by a narrower margin than expected.

Even Gore's pollster, Harrison

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Hickman, who was brought on board after Clinton pollster Mark Penn was dumped, is a bruiser. Described by *Newsweek* as "a border-state populist, with a good feel for angry blue-collar voters," Hickman has helped Democratic senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska get elected and reelected in a very Republican state.

Hickman also worked on Kerrey's 1992 presidential bid, but the experience is probably one he'd rather forget. Kerrey ran an extremely weak campaign. Even after the story of Clinton's draft-dodging broke, Kerrey, a decorated Vietnam veteran, couldn't make any inroads. Desperate, Hickman began anonymously faxing reporters an unsigned memo documenting inconsistencies in Clinton's statements about the draft. When the *Boston Globe* published an article tracing the fax to Hickman, Kerrey exploded. At a press conference, he said he was "quite angry" and felt "betrayed" by Hickman. He then slapped his pollster with a nickname he's never quite been able to shake: "Harrison Hitman."

The hiring of Hickman underscores just how little Gore's personnel moves are dictated by loyalty to Clinton. Hickman is known as one of the party's most consistently anti-Clinton operatives (Penn, his predecessor, had counseled Gore to stick close to the president). Similarly, Donna Brazile, Gore's campaign manager, has never been closely aligned with the Clinton administration.

Uniting Gore's consultants, other than their sharp elbows, is their scant experience with winning presidential campaigns. Yet, it's also true that campaign consultants have a limited effect when peddling candidates as well-known as Al Gore. Thus their efforts, if Gore is the Democratic nominee, will almost surely focus on beating up his Republican opponent. That's bound to be more difficult with George W. Bush or John McCain than it was with Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich. But when innuendo is fair game, and negative ads are not constrained by the facts, anything's possible. Just ask Ellen Sauerbrey. ♦

Winnowing Candidates in Iowa

After the GOP caucuses, how many will be left standing? BY FRED BARNES

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

GEORGE W. BUSH has little to gain and a lot to lose in Iowa. At a minimum, he ought to do better than any Republican presidential candidate has ever done here. That's 37 percent of the vote in the Iowa caucuses, which Bob Dole achieved in 1988. Bush says this is "a good goal to accomplish." Even if he succeeds, however, he may not get much political credit for it, at least in the media. Since John McCain, Bush's chief rival, is skipping the January 24 caucuses, the press has downgraded Iowa as a factor in the GOP nomination fight. So a Bush victory is likely to be interpreted as merely setting the stage for the ultimate one-on-one clash between Bush and McCain in the New Hampshire primary on February 1.

In truth, there's more at stake in Iowa than the press realizes. The caucuses will answer the largest single question in the campaign: Is Bush a strong vote-getter outside of Texas? He's a proven fund-raiser, he's done famously well in national opinion polls, and he's put together an impressive campaign team of political strategists, organizers, and policy advisers. But he's yet to show he can inspire voters to turn out for him. In a straw vote last August in Ames, Bush's performance was underwhelming. He was supported by less than one-third of Iowa Republicans—despite a heroic organizing effort and the absence of the McCain campaign. Bush got a prosaic 31 percent. Steve Forbes finished second with 20 percent.

Bush should improve on that in the caucuses. His campaign started late in Iowa, so his team wasn't fully ready for the straw vote. He's certainly in a stronger position now. He's spent more than $1 million on TV ads in the state. Best of all for Bush, three competitors for the moderate-to-conservative majority among Iowa Republicans have dropped out, and he is the likeliest second choice for most of their supporters. The question, of course, is whether they'll bother to go to the caucuses. Elizabeth Dole's endorsement of Bush and her appearance with him in Cedar Rapids and two other Iowa cities on January 4 was aimed at stirring her backers to vote.

Since the straw vote, Bush has put together a remarkable coalition. His natural base is the same as his father's in 1980 and 1988: the party establishment that's fiscally conservative and socially moderate. George W. has captured these folks, and the candidate who does this normally wins the caucuses. He's also done amazingly well in attracting social conservatives. Operatives for Gary Bauer, the strongest social conservative among the GOP candidates, complain that Bush—not Alan Keyes or Forbes—is their biggest problem in Iowa. He's capturing the largest chunk of social conservatives, who make up roughly 35 percent of the Iowa Republican electorate.

The best example is state representative Rosemary Thompson of Cedar Rapids. During the Reagan administration, she worked for Bauer when he was an assistant secretary at the Education Department. In 1999, Bauer came to her home to ask for her support for president. "Gary," she recalls telling him, "I love you, but I

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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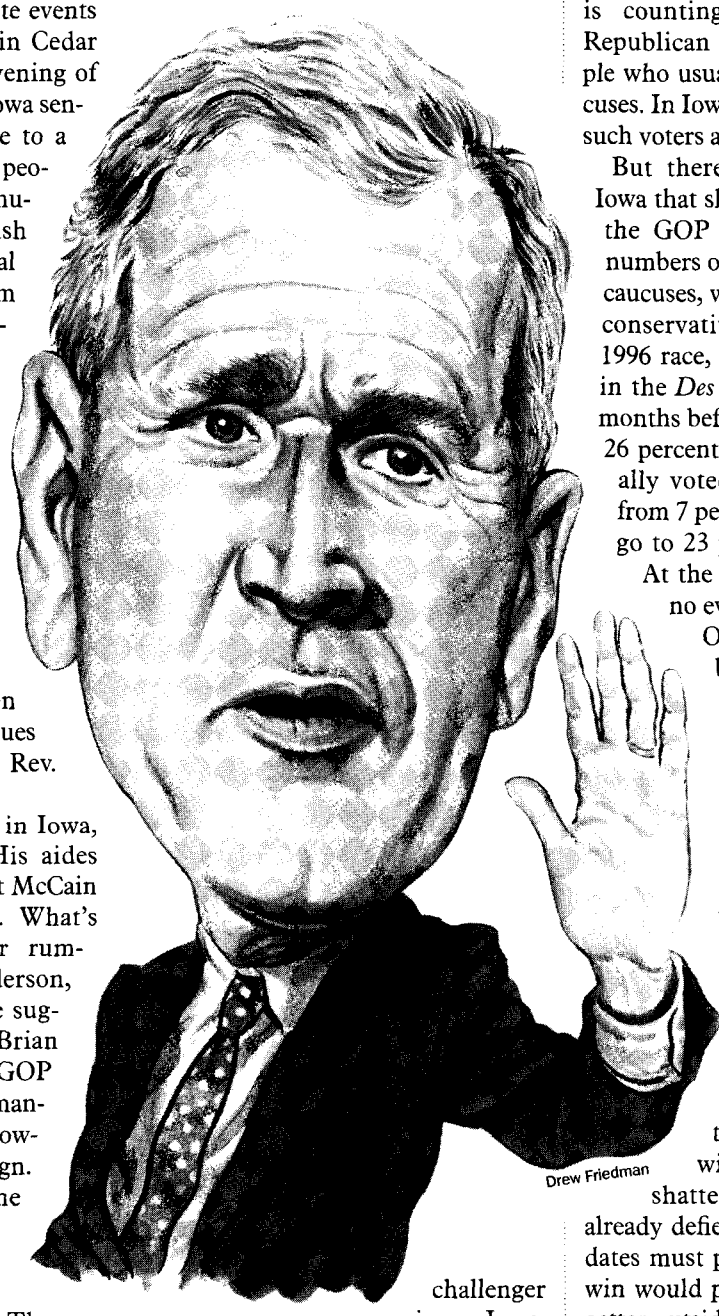
don't think you can win." Then, she signed on as co-chair of Bush's campaign in the Cedar Rapids area. "He has the same qualities Ronald Reagan had," Thompson says. "He can tell a story. He's upbeat. He's a people person."

The breadth of Bush's coalition was on display at two separate events at the Five Seasons Hotel in Cedar Rapids last week. On the evening of January 4, Bush, Dole, and Iowa senator Charles Grassley spoke to a gathering made up mostly of people from the business community. The next morning, Bush addressed a breakfast of social conservatives, many of them pastors at evangelical churches who had backed Pat Robertson's presidential bid in 1988. The evangelicals were even more enthusiastic than the business people. "I believe [Bush] is the answer to our prayers," said Rev. Francis Frangipane of Robbins. "He knows when and how to implement righteousness." Bush has "a proven ability to blend faith and values with government," insisted Rev. Dick Hardy of Des Moines.

Bush has two opponents in Iowa, one imaginary, one real. His aides here and in Austin insist that McCain is really running in Iowa. What's their evidence? "We hear rumblings," says Joe Gunderson, Bush's Iowa chairman. One suggestive bit involves Brian Kennedy, who was Iowa GOP chairman before becoming manager of Lamar Alexander's now-defunct presidential campaign. Kennedy now works for the McCain campaign, but he lives in Tennessee and has been back to Iowa only twice in recent months. The Bushies also point to McCain's appearance at one televised debate in Iowa and the fact that he said he would attend another. "There's a reason he's coming to the debates," says Gunderson. Yes, there is. McCain would like to get 10 percent or so of the vote without fielding an organization or campaigning in Iowa. But this *may not be realistic of* McCain, since organization truly matters in getting voters to the caucuses.

And organization is why Forbes is a legitimate challenger in Iowa. "We have the best ground game, the best organization in the state," says Jim Tobin, Forbes's political director. Practically no one disputes this. Forbes has spent nearly twice what Bush has on TV ads. And he's signed up some of the best operatives in the state. Still, for all his effort, Forbes can't get above the low 20s in public opinion polls. The Bauer campaign's tracking of the numbers puts Forbes in the teens (with Bauer only a few points behind). To finish what Tobin calls a "close second" to Bush, Forbes is counting on "non-traditional" Republican voters. That means people who usually don't attend the caucuses. In Iowa, candidates who rely on such voters are usually disappointed.


Drew Friedman

But there's another tradition in Iowa that should benefit Forbes. For the GOP front-runner, high poll numbers often don't stand up in the caucuses, while the candidate of the conservatives often surges. In the 1996 race, Bob Dole got 41 percent in the *Des Moines Register* poll two months before the caucuses but only 26 percent when Republicans actually voted. Pat Buchanan soared from 7 percent with two months to go to 23 percent in the caucuses.

At the moment, though, there's no evidence of a Forbes surge. On the contrary, he bombed in the first TV debate in Iowa.

For Bush, bliss in Iowa consists of four things: winning the caucuses, beating the 37 percent marker, whipping Forbes (or Gary Bauer, whoever is second) by a good bit more than 10 percent, and holding McCain to a low single digit. My guess is there's a fair chance all four will happen. And if they do, the conventional wisdom about Iowa will be shattered again. McCain has already defied the rule that all candidates must play in Iowa. A big Bush win would prove he *is* a strong vote-getter outside of Texas. And it would also mean that not three (as in '96) or even two (as in '80) viable candidates would emerge from the caucuses, but only one: George W. Then, the stage truly would be set for the clash of two titans in New Hampshire. ♦

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Boris Yeltsin, Man of the Decade

Yes, he had flaws, but how many leaders have accomplished more? BY LEON ARON

TWO DAYS BEFORE Boris Yeltsin resigned on December 31, a retired captain in the Russian navy, Alexander Nikitin, was acquitted of espionage in a St. Petersburg courtroom and released from custody. Nikitin's alleged crime was passing information about Russian nuclear submarines to a Norwegian environmental group. The judge ruled that the suit had been brought under an ex post facto law in "direct violation of the constitution."

As far as anyone, including Nikitin's lawyers, can gather, this is the first time in Russian history that the secret police—the FSB, successor to the KGB—has been forced to release a person it had accused of treason. Indeed the mere fact that the trial was open to the public is a miracle. A five-minute sentencing before a troika of KGB officers and a bullet in the back of the head in the basement of the Lubyanka prison, or a slow death by starvation in a faraway labor camp would have been Nikitin's fate under the Soviet regime. This time, the FSB released a statement acknowledging that the ruling had been "reached on the basis of the law."

Astonishing as it is, the Nikitin case is not an exception but part of a trend. In 1998, over 100,000 lawsuits were brought by ordinary citizens against government officials for illegal administrative actions, and in 80 percent of them, the courts ruled for the plaintiffs. Since the constitution requires that all capital cases be heard by juries, and only a few Russian provinces have begun to experiment with jury trials, capital punishment has been, in effect, abolished in Russia—a country that, along with the United States, China, and South Africa, led the world in executions just a few years back. The courts also have been throwing out—by the dozen—the Army's cases against "deserters," on the ground that the Army has violated their constitutional right to alternative service. And the courts have dismissed numerous suits against foreign religious "sects" brought by local authorities under the restrictive and xenophobic Law on Religious Freedom passed by the Duma over Yeltsin's veto in 1997.

Kevin Chadwick

Peter Solomon of the University of Toronto traces these developments to the 1992 Law on the Status of Judges, which established life terms for judges and made the self-governing Congress of Judges the sole arbiter of judicial behavior, banning interference by state authorities. He calls the law "revolutionary."

Russia's legal revolution, virtually unnoticed in the West, is just one manifestation of the tectonic shift that took place during the eight years of the Yeltsin presidency. Boris Yeltsin shaped, inspired, led, and sustained at least three revolutions at once: a political revolution, which established some key principles and institutions of democracy (freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of political opposition, free legislative and parliamentary elections, and the separation of powers); an economic revolution, which introduced private property and a market economy; and an anti-imperial revolution, which, for the first time in history, separated the state of Russia from its empire.

All great revolutions, in the end, fall short of their initial supporters' hopes and take decades, sometimes centuries, to reach maturity. But perhaps no other great revolution has ever dismantled so crushing a legacy from the *ancien régime* with so little violence and ushered in a freedom so complete. The weight of the Soviet legacy, along with Yeltsin's own obvious blunders and the efforts of a well-organized and determined opposition free to work its will, account for the tortuousness of Russia's transition out of communism.

But to say that a revolution has failed to live up to its original promise is not to say that no revolution has taken place. The traditional ills of the Russian state—militarism, brutality, corruption, xenophobia, authoritarianism—have not been extinguished in Yeltsin's eight years, but the barriers erected against their recurrence are stronger now than at any time in Russian history.

That this epochal accomplishment

Leon Aron is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His Boris Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life *will be published in February by St. Martin's Press.*

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passed largely unmentioned in the reports and analyses of Yeltsin's resignation is due, in equal measure, to Yeltsin's own contradictory persona and the peculiar predilections of those who write about him. There have been two Yeltsins in the public eye. One, Yeltsin the politician, was the avid and competent greasy-pole climber, obsessed with power and its gaudy trappings, petty, jealous of competitors' popularity, often crude and rude to subordinates, tolerant of (if not indeed complicit in) corruption. In many ways he ran the Kremlin like a Byzantine court (or a provincial party committee, where he spent 17 years), rife with intrigue, back-stabbing, favoritism, sudden firings, demotions, and promotions.

Co-existing with that Yeltsin—occasionally overlapping, sometimes clashing and retreating, but always distinct and resilient—has been Yeltsin the leader, a revolutionary and a visionary. In the fall of 1991, he, like Lincoln or de Gaulle, took over a nation in the midst of a mortal crisis and held it together. Not only did he cope with chaos and decay, but he forged, from scratch, a new state: proto-democratic, post-imperial, demilitarized, decentralized, and federalized; a new proto-capitalist economic system; and a new country, post-Soviet Russia.

It is the first Yeltsin that has dominated the news—an object of almost obsessive attention by those whom the great British philosopher and historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin called "glass and plastic" historians—to whose ranks I would add journalists, editorialists, and sundry experts. These sages, Berlin wrote, "regard all facts as equally interesting," and the result is "craven pedantry and blindness." Most of what Americans know about Yeltsin they have learned from the writings of the glass-and-plastic crowd, works informed by the historical awareness of a fruit fly.

When all facts are treated as equal, Yeltsin's credit card bills allegedly paid by the Swiss construction company Mabetex are the equivalent of the Treaty of Friendship he signed with independent Ukraine; his daughter's Kremlin job is as momentous as his slashing of the nuclear arsenal by 60 percent and halving of the armed forces; his drinking and "erratic behavior" are as significant as Russia's critical assistance in brokering a Serbian retreat from Kosovo and an end to NATO's air war against Yugoslavia; and the "immunity" granted him upon retirement (hardly worth the paper it is written on) is as important as the departure of the last Russian soldier from the Skrunda radar base in western Latvia in October 1999, ending almost 300 years of Russian occupation of East-Central Europe.

But history is notoriously parsimonious and does not treat all facts as equally salient. Only a few years from now, the clutter of secondary and tertiary developments, which appear all-important today, will fade from memory, and what will be left standing is the towering edifice of Yeltsin's achievement. Its fundamental elements not even professional Yeltsin-haters in Moscow and Washington can deny: Boris Yeltsin inherited a decaying, bankrupt, thoroughly militarized, and just as thoroughly corrupt Communist totalitarian empire and created the freest, most tolerant, most open state in Russian history—the first ever that is neither a monar-

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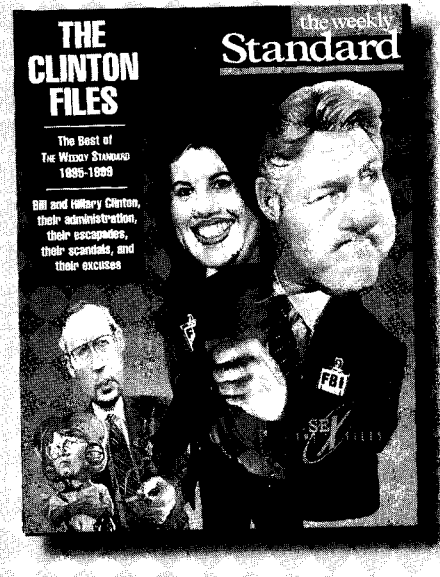

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chy nor a dictatorship. He will be remembered as the man who ended Soviet communism, dissolved the Russian empire, led the country while it coped with the enormous, painful shocks of a new economic, political, and social reality, and prevented a Communist restoration—without abrogating human rights and political liberties.

He will be remembered, as well, for forging an entirely novel national consensus on the rules of the game. As hundreds of polls of Russians, and Russian elites, across the ideological spectrum confirm, this consensus holds personal and political freedoms vital, dictatorship unacceptable, and government legitimate only if freely elected.

Great leaders do not leave under fire. De Gaulle resigned not during the 1968 crisis but 11 months later, after he had pulled France through. Yeltsin left not in August 1998—when the ruble collapsed and the Communist press in Russia and elite press in Washington and New York were announcing the end of the "Yeltsin regime"—but 16 months later. A year ago, he was offered immunity (in exchange for surrendering most of his constitutional power to the Communist-dominated Duma) by prime minister Yevgeny Primakov, at a time when the country was reeling from the August shock and the Kremlin was extremely vulnerable. Yeltsin rejected the deal publicly and indignantly, and dared the Duma to impeach him. (The Communists, supported in the Duma by Grigory Yavlinsky's Yabloko, tried to do this and failed.) It is laughable to think that a man for whom power and politics are lifeblood—who stood up to two tank divisions in August 1991 and delivered his first speech outside the besieged parliament building in an open square after he had been warned that enemy snipers were deployed on the roofs of the high-rise buildings around him—could be bullied out of power by "ultimatums" or pushed into retirement by anyone.

With their trademark disdain for the freely expressed opinions of ordinary Russians, the glass-and-plastic experts (who for years have been telling us that Yeltsin would never leave the Kremlin, would cancel elections, would call in the military) have ignored a crucial factor in the timing of the resignation: the results of the December 19 legislative elections. The Kremlin spokesman called these elections a "peaceful revolution," and he did not exaggerate by much. For the first time since the end of the Soviet Union, pro-reform parties, blocs, and independent candidates have come close to a majority in the Duma. For the first time, all the major parties (including the Communists) have accepted the chief planks of Yeltsin's economic agenda: privatization, integration into the world economy, lower inflation, tighter budgets, and a steady reduction of state control over the economy.

As in legislative elections in any other democracy, the electoral success of the administration was not an accident. In 1999, Russia's economy is likely to post its first significant GDP growth, with industrial-sector growth as high as 8 percent. Last year, 12 million Russians traveled abroad. The incidence of car ownership has almost doubled since 1990. At the end of the Soviet regime, 1,200 new books were published; last year, there were 12,000. As Michael McFaul of the Carnegie Endowment reminds us, for 10 years pollsters have been asking Russians whether they and their families have "adjusted" to the new economic reality. Until last year, "yes" responses never exceeded 30 percent. In November, the figure was 55 percent.

At no time in the last eight years has the "de-Bolshevization of Russia"—which Boris Yeltsin embraced as his paramount goal in September 1991—seemed so secure. Unlike Yeltsin the politician, who is old, sick, and deeply unpopular, Yeltsin the leader has retired undefeated. ♦

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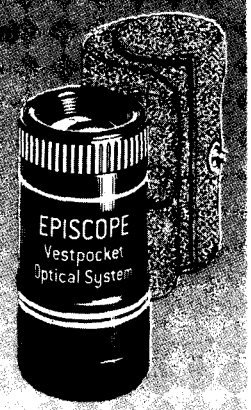

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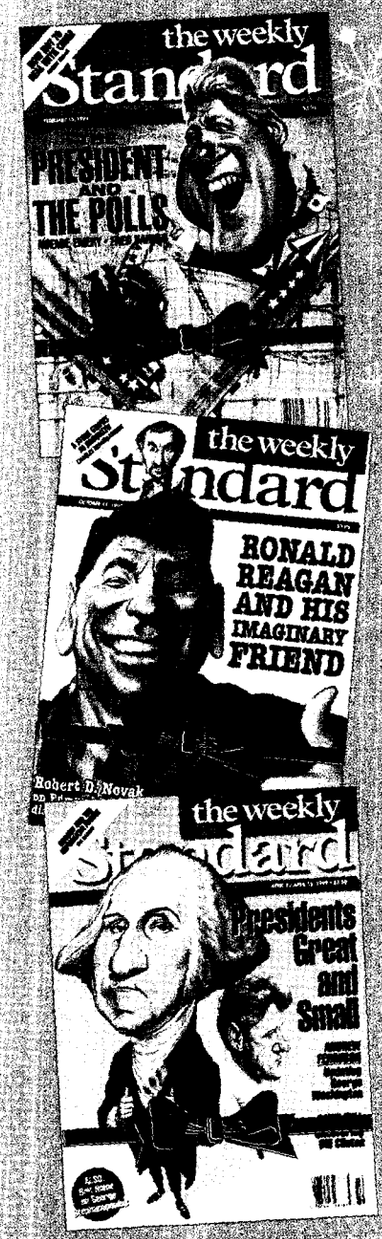

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The Onomastic Cringe

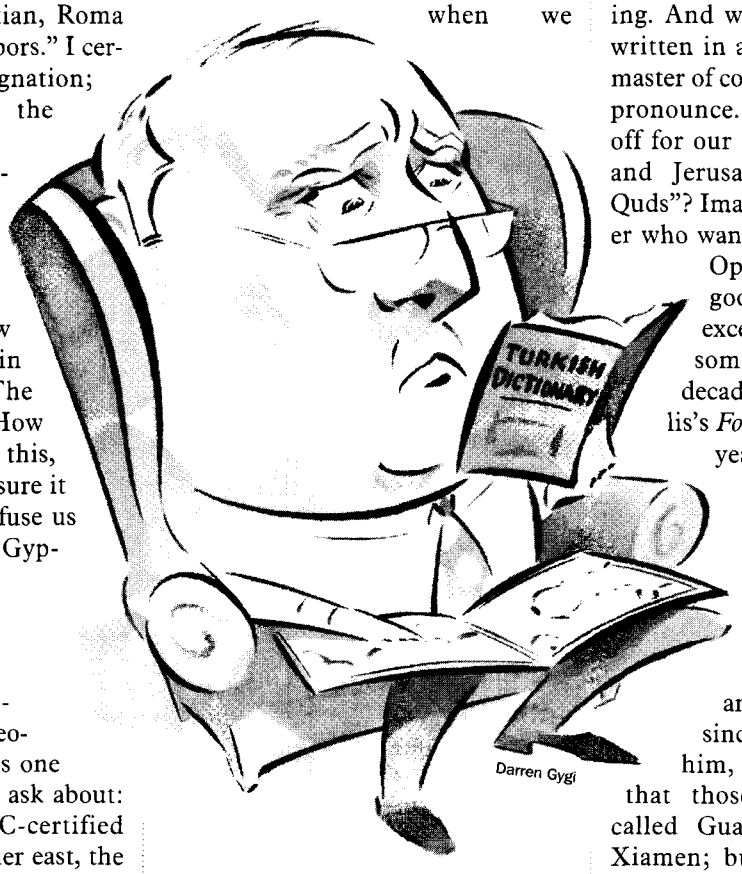
Whatever happened to good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon place names? BY JOHN DERBYSHIRE

THE INDISPENSABLE Michael Kelly in a recent column deplores the silence of the U.S. government in the face of a massive ethnic cleansing currently under way in Kosovo, this time "conducted by the Albanians against their ethnic Serb, Croatian, Roma and Muslim Slavic neighbors." I certainly share Kelly's indignation; but—excuse me—who the heck are the Roma?

The question is rhetorical: Having been given the novels of George Borrow (*Lavengro, Romany Rye*) to read at an early age, I happen to know that *rom* means "man" in the Gypsy language. The Roma are the Gypsies. How many other people know this, I cannot guess, but I feel sure it is not many. So why confuse us like this? Why not say "Gypsy"?

There is a lot of this going on. A scholarly e-group I belong to recently featured some e-mail exchanges about a people called the Saami. This one I didn't know and had to ask about: "Saami" is the new, PC-certified name of the Lapps. Further east, the Samoyeds are now "Nemtsi." Meanwhile, down in Africa, Hottentots are "Khoi" while Bushmen must be called "San." What will now become of my party piece, reciting the silliest word in the German language: *Hottentotenpotentatenstantenattentäter*—"one who assails the aunt of a Hottentot potentate"?

Ethnonymy—the naming of peoples—is apparently headed down the same slippery slope that toponymy—the naming of places—embarked on 20 years ago, when we were all supposed to start saying "Beijing" and "Mumbai" instead of Peking and Bombay, out of imagined deference to the sensibilities of the Third World. Toponymical practice has now passed far beyond the bounds of reason into a realm of utter lunacy. The other day I needed to know the name of that wee gulf up in the top righthand corner of the Mediterranean. I pulled down my *Times Atlas of the World* and got the answer: *Iskenderun körfezi*. Now, I am sure that somewhere in there was the Turkish word for "gulf," but, alas, I had mislaid my Turkish dictionary. (So I went to the attic and looked the place up in my grandfather's 1922 atlas. "Gulf of Alexandretta." Ah.)



Granted, it is a courtesy to refer to peoples and their places by the names they themselves use. But why is this consideration supposed to override all others? Here are some of those other considerations:

¶ EDUCATION: Teachers can't get even the brute facts of geography, history, and ethnology into kids' heads when the names keep changing. And when the new names are written in a way that nobody but a master of comparative graphetics can pronounce. Who, exactly, is better off for our calling Gypsies "Roma" and Jerusalem "Yerushalayim/Al-Quds"? Imagine a bright tenth-grader who wants to do a project on the Opium Wars. He finds a good library with lots of excellent books on the topic, some of them published decades ago (e.g. Maurice Collis's *Foreign Mud*, still—after 50 years—one of the best accounts of the Opium Wars). He reads of action going on in places called Canton, Swatow, and Amoy. But where *are* those places? He will not find them in any school atlas published since about 1980. I could tell him, if he knew to ask me, that those cities are nowadays called Guangzhou, Shantou, and Xiamen; but of course he doesn't know. Why are we thus distracting him from his historical researches? Don't kids face enough distractions?

¶ PHONETICS: The customary practice until recently was this: If a foreign name comes to the attention of English-speakers, we are entitled to Anglicize it for our convenience. The Swedish city-name Göteborg, for example, contains two sounds—

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one vowel, one consonant—that English-speakers cannot produce without special training. No problem; we'll call it Gothenburg. This very sensible principle has been replaced by a new one: Foreign names must be rendered in their native orthography; or, when that involves some alphabet different from ours, in a transcription as phonetically faithful as possible. The trouble is, this doesn't work. "Peking" is a fair approximation of the way most southern Chinese pronounce the name of their capital. "Beijing" is a shot at the official—under the current regime—northern pronunciation, but it really gets us no closer. English-speakers voice the "b," which should be unvoiced; and they Frenchify the "j" into *zh*, a sound that does not occur in Chinese. And of course nobody attempts the tones, a non-optional feature of Chinese pronunciation. (With wrong tones, *Beijing* means "background.") So the net result of all this upheaval is that a familiar Anglicization of a foreign name has been replaced by another Anglicization, no closer than the first. Was this journey really necessary?

¶ FAIRNESS: The need to call peoples and places by their local names is entirely a figment of the Anglo-Saxon liberal imagination—yet another aspect of the absurd cultural cringing our civilization has gone in for this past 30 years. (I hereby christen the whole phenomenon under discussion "The Onomastic Cringe.") The beneficiaries of this consideration, however, do not reciprocate. Chinese atlases show England's great university city as *Niujin*, with no hint that we locals actually pronounce it "Oxford." And I have no doubt the Hottentots still call my own people what they have always called them—probably "white devils."

¶ CUSSEDNESS: Damn whatever United Nations committee is foisting this gibberish on us! To hell with them and all their works! *Gypsies! Peking! Bombay! Lapps! Hottentots!* Come and get me, you bastards! ♦

Environmentalists vs. Scientists

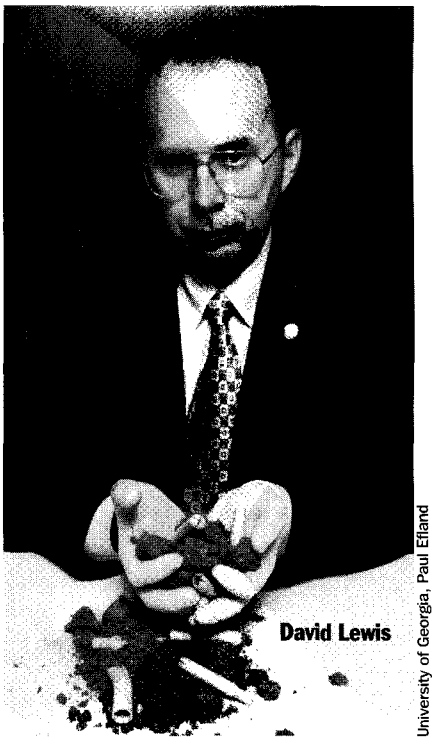
The EPA has become an inhospitable place for dissenting experts. BY BONNER R. COHEN

IT MUST HAVE BEEN A SHOCK to people in communities from Maine to California to learn that the party chiefly responsible for contaminating their drinking water these past few years was none other than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Yet in overseeing a congressionally mandated program to put "cleaner-burning" fuels in the cities with the most serious air problems, EPA allowed the gasoline additive MTBE (methyl tertiary butyl ether) to find its way into the water.

Such was the public outcry over the drinking water contamination that EPA in July 1999 was forced to accept the verdict of a blue-ribbon panel and recommend that the use of MTBE be sharply reduced. What makes this fiasco instructive is that EPA had ignored warnings from its own scientists contained in a December 1992 report, "Alternative Fuels Research Strategy," which concluded that the gasoline additive could leak from gas stations and underground storage tanks and end up in groundwater.

It was yet another example of the agency moving full-speed-ahead with a regulatory program before fully assessing the scientific implications. And it is just this kind of behavior that is prompting a growing number of long-serving career EPA employees to challenge the agency's brass on a variety of fronts. Sometimes EPA's dissidents confront the agency openly, for which they can pay dearly, and sometimes they do so furtively, through leaks or clandestine meetings with members of Congress. The issues

Bonner R. Cohen is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va.



University of Georgia, Paul Efland

that drive them to rebellion range from the agency's misuse of science to fraud, waste, and abuse in the multitude of programs EPA administers. What the dissidents have in common, however, is their deeply held conviction that the agency has lost its way and is about to do—or is already doing—more harm than good.

Microbiologist David Lewis has spent 29 years with EPA. In his view, "The use of science at EPA has deteriorated to the point that the agency, rather than protecting public health and the environment, is actually putting them at risk."

One case in point makes the MTBE debacle look tame by comparison. Since 1993, EPA has allowed so-called Class B municipal sludge,

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mostly human waste, to be spread as fertilizer on farmlands, national forests, and other areas. Though the agency says the practice is safe, EPA scientists, including Lewis, warned that the pathogen-laden sludge, which is still "biologically active" when dumped, could trigger a host of illnesses in humans and animals.

Unexplained deaths linked to sludge have occurred in several places, including those of an 11-year-old boy in Pennsylvania, a 26-year-old man in New Hampshire, and hundreds of dairy cows on two Georgia farms. Early in 1999, the Butler County (Ohio) Department of Environmental Services requested, and got, an investigation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention into severe illnesses coal miners are suffering after exposure to sludge applied for mine reclamation. Released through the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in August, this investigation concluded that, "While the specific component(s) of the sewage sludge responsible for employees' symptoms have not been determined, the nature and timing of the symptoms suggest occupational exposure by ingestion or inhalation of the sludge as a probable cause."

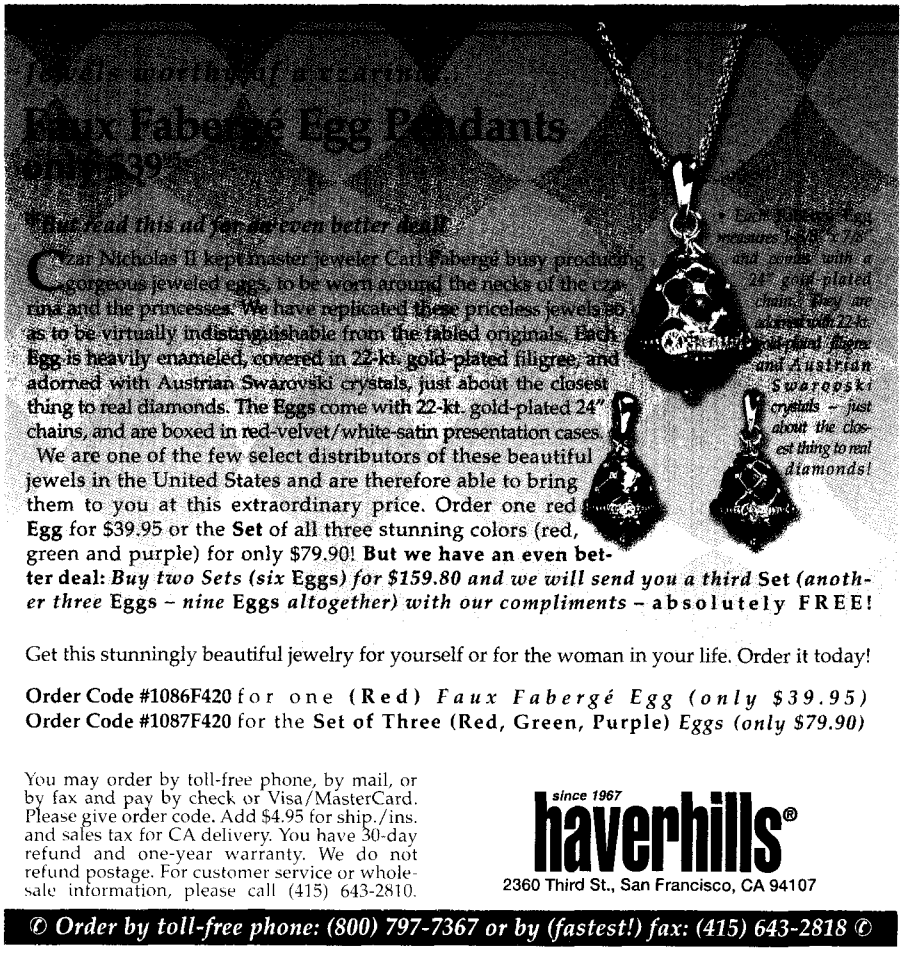
Science at EPA suffered another setback in December 1998 when the agency's brass overruled its own scientists and torpedoed a science-based standard for chloroform in drinking water. The decision, dissidents argue, will force water system operators to waste precious resources battling fictitious threats resulting from the purification process itself. Chloroform is created when drinking water is chlorinated to remove microbial pathogens. The presence in drinking water of trace amounts of chloroform and other so-called disinfectant byproducts is thus inevitable. Water suppliers in the United States, however, have come to see the presence of these traces as posing a far lower risk to public health than the pathogens that would otherwise be in drinking water. Contrary to its scientists' recommendations, EPA insisted on an unachievable chloroform standard of zero.

In explaining its chloroform decision, EPA argued better safe than sorry: It is "appropriate and prudent to err on the side of public health protection when there are indications that exposure to a contaminant may present risks to public health, rather than take no action until risks are unequivocally proven."

Hugh Wise, an environmental scientist at the agency, is one of many professionals there who don't share EPA's views on risk. Speaking for himself and not the agency, Wise notes that "EPA regularly designates certain chemicals as 'toxic' pollutants or 'hazardous' pollutants but fails to inform the public of one of the cardinal rules of toxicology. The dose makes the poison. The mere presence of the chemicals does not convey toxicity."

Yet EPA scientists who see their disciplines misused and try to warn higher-ups that the agency is on the wrong track face the threat of retaliation. In 1993, David Lewis became so concerned that he wrote letters to vice president Al Gore and EPA administrator Carol Browner informing them of the abuse of science at the agency. When he got no response, Lewis went public, with an article in the prestigious British journal *Nature* (June 27, 1996) asserting that science at EPA had reached the point of crisis. The ink was hardly dry on the *Nature* piece before EPA retaliated against Lewis, charging him with a series of ethics violations, all of them later thrown out by a Department of Labor mediation board. Lewis filed a whistleblower complaint and, in a settlement last year, was awarded $140,000 in damages and legal fees.

His is no isolated case. Brian Rimar, a scientist with EPA's regional office in Denver, was asked by his superiors to carry out an assessment of an EPA cleanup proposal at a Superfund site in Colorado. When Rimar concluded that EPA's plan



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would leave so much copper in local soil and plants that it would endanger nearby livestock, he, too, was harassed by EPA's internal investigative arm, the Office of Inspector General, before being driven from the agency. Like Lewis, Rimar sued the agency and was awarded a settlement, $100,000, last fall.

The treatment meted out to Lewis and Rimar is not limited to scientists; it is also used against EPA employees who report wrongdoing or refuse to carry out instructions they believe are illegal or unethical. According to attorney Stephen Kohn, president of the National Whistleblowers Center, EPA's arsenal includes "threats to demote or transfer employees, baseless criminal investigations, and trumped-up charges of ethics violations, all aimed at ostracizing, intimidating and ultimately silencing those who speak out."

In a letter to the *Washington Times* on June 10, 1998, 13 EPA dissidents wrote that they found the situation at the agency "so reprehensible that we submit this letter, risking our careers rather than choosing to remain silent." They went on to protest what they said was "fraud or waste in our agency, involving hundreds of millions of dollars, and alerting the public that EPA regulations and enforcement actions based on poor science stand to harm rather than protect public health and the environment." The dissidents weren't fooling when they said they were "risking their careers." Of the 13 people who signed the letter, five have lost their jobs.

Given the lengths to which EPA is willing to go to snuff out internal opposition, some EPA dissidents go underground. In May, a study titled *Murky Waters: Official Water Quality Reports Are All Wet: An Inside View of EPA's Implementation of the Clean Water Act* was released by a group who call themselves Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. They accuse EPA and state environmental agencies of engaging in a reporting "game" whereby "an unfortunate mix of politics, bureaucratic inertia, and bad science means that conflicting, erroneous, and manipulated sets of water quality data containing little accurate information on the actual condition of the nation's rivers and streams are routinely reported by states and dutifully compiled by EPA for presentation to Congress and the public." Tellingly, the authors of the report—EPA employees and current and former state environmental officials—chose to remain anonymous.

Considering what Rimar calls the "atmosphere of fear" prevailing at EPA, it is not surprising that many of the agency's dissidents have turned to Congress for help. Senator James Inhofe, who chairs a panel of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, recently told a Capitol Hill conference that he has been sought out by EPA scientists complaining about their treatment by the agency. Inhofe pledged to hold hearings soon on EPA's "abusive tactics."

While Inhofe investigates the agency's mistreatment of its scientists, Senator Christopher Bond, chairman of the Small Business Committee, has his sights set on exposing EPA's practice of funneling grants to organizations that can be relied on to support the agency's regulatory actions. With the assistance of EPA dissidents, Bond has determined that the agency has passed out nearly $1 billion to about 1,000 such organizations in the past five years. Finally, the sludge issue will be at the center of hearings expected to begin by early February before James Sensenbrenner's House Science Committee.

For its part, EPA apparently believes it best not to repeat a negative. The agency doesn't comment publicly on its legal battles with Lewis, Rimar, and other employees suing EPA. It says it "supports the efforts of its scientists . . . to engage in outside activities that are consistent with government regulations." But the activities of the dissidents strongly suggest Rimar's "atmosphere of fear" may be closer to the mark.

Lewis, now on the faculty at the University of Georgia and awaiting termination by EPA, is hopeful the congressional investigations will bear fruit. "The agency's a mess," he says. "The more they dig, the more they'll find." ♦

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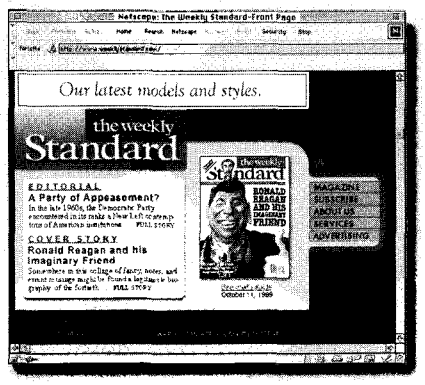

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What the Vermont Court Has Wrought

We are now on the way to a radical redefinition of marriage, but it's not too late to save the institution from its enemies.

By David Orgon Coolidge

What exactly had happened? This was the big question on December 20, when the Vermont supreme court issued its long-awaited ruling on same-sex "marriage" in *Baker* v. *State*. Three same-sex couples had claimed that Vermont's marriage law violated the Vermont constitution. The court did not rule on the marriage statute, but it commanded the legislature, in the name of the Vermont constitution and "our common humanity," to equalize benefits for same-sex couples.

Commentators flocked to characterize the opinion. Did the court still recognize the unique identity of marriage? Did it "give back" the issue to the legislature? Was this a classic example of judicial tyranny, or a courageous vindication of civil rights? Who won—the state? The plaintiffs? Everyone? Nobody?

These questions will reverberate across the legal and political landscape in coming months. But there is a more important question lurking in the court's opinion: What does the Vermont supreme court mean by marriage? True enough, the court's opinion does not overturn any statute. But it tells us a lot about what is at stake in the legal definition of marriage.

Our statutes, after all, embody an understanding of marriage. A marriage is formed by a man and a woman, equal yet different, who join their lives to form a family. Marriage aspires to permanence, fidelity, and children. Marriage law recognizes and supports these aspirations.

This view of marriage has been under intense attack for at least 50 years. Yet it has not been displaced. Permanence has been assaulted by no-fault divorce, yet marriage is still an open-ended covenant, rather than a contract with an expiration date. Fidelity has been de-emphasized in the culture at large, yet marriage still includes only two persons. Openness to children is being challenged by a culture of "choice," but people still associate marriage with children. Meanwhile, socially, as opposed to legally, marriage continues to have tremendous appeal. (Advocates of same-sex "marriage" trade precisely on this appeal.)

What, then, does the Vermont supreme court have to say about marriage? Listen carefully:

> The State's interest in extending official recognition and legal protection to the professed commitment of two individuals to a lasting relationship of mutual affection is predicated on the belief that legal support of a couple's commitment provides stability for the individuals, their family, and the broader community. Although plaintiffs' interest in seeking state recognition and protection of their mutual commitment may—in view of divorce statistics—represent "the triumph of hope over experience," the essential aspect of their claim is simply and fundamentally for inclusion in the family of State-sanctioned human relations.

(This is not the stuff that dreams are made of.)

Notice how the aspects of marriage are characterized by the court. While the court is high on stability, it is openly skeptical about permanence. While the court still talks of "couples," it offers no principled basis for limiting state benefits to "the professed commitment of two individuals to a lasting relationship of mutual affection." Prominent advocates of same-sex marriage believe that limiting marriage to couples is "too dyadic" and narrow. They believe that legalizing same-sex marriage will prepare us for additional "reforms." Among them is David Chambers of the University of Michigan, a part-time Vermonter, who advocates shedding the dyadic outlook in an article cited by the court.

Finally, the court's description makes no mention

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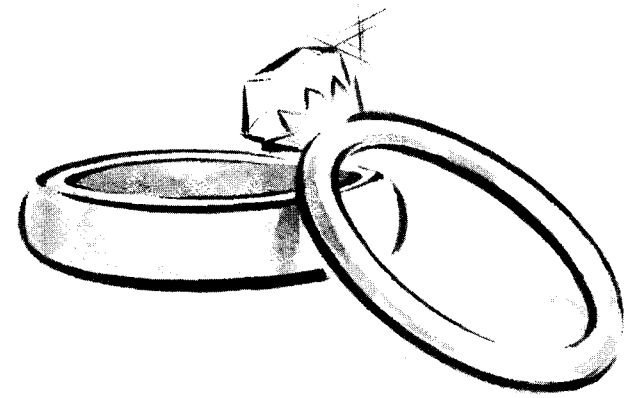
whatsoever of the unique bond between a mother, a father, and their children. Other portions of the opinion tell us why. Opines the court:

> the laudable governmental goal of promoting a commitment between married couples to promote the security of their children and the community as a whole provides no reasonable basis for denying the legal benefits and protections of marriage to same-sex couples, *who are no differently situated with respect to this goal than their opposite-sex counterparts*. [Italics added.]

Here we come to the heart of the matter: There is no necessary connection between marriage and having children. Some people have children even though they don't marry. Others do not have children but do marry. Anybody can have a child using new reproductive technologies, and same-sex couples can adopt children under Vermont law. The connection between marriage and children has become arbitrary.

This adds up to a functional redefinition of marriage. The state identifies certain socially beneficial tasks (provision of stability, child-rearing). It defines a status (marriage) and, by issuing licenses, assigns this status to those who seek to perform the tasks. To this status the state attaches rights, duties, and rewards.

Justice Denise Johnson, who concurred in the 5-0 decision, spelled out the implication in a partial dissent: If *this* is marriage, same-sex couples have a right to it. Let us follow her logic: (1) If the Vermont constitution forbids what the majority calls "artificial governmental preferments and advantages," and (2) marriage is currently limited to male-female couples, yet (3) marriage is a government policy to foster commitment, stability, and child protection, and (4) same-sex couples can be committed, stable, and good protectors of children, then (5) the remedy is to issue marriage licenses—not just benefits—to same-sex couples. Johnson is right about the meaning of the decision, even if the other justices flinched rather than endorse the obvious remedy of same-sex "marriage."



Darren Gygi

Where will all this lead? Let us first consider what may happen now in Vermont. The governor has lauded the court's decision as "very Vermont" and has called for "domestic partnership" legislation. The legislature has a wide spectrum of options. It can simply dig in its heels and refuse to acknowledge the court's opinion. After all, the court didn't strike down any law; it only commanded a remedy. There is something inherently overweening, non-adjudicative, and political about such a decision. The legislature could resist this seizure of power. It could adopt a resolution denouncing the method and content of the opinion and decline to legislate. It could also move to amend the Vermont constitution, either with reference to marriage and related benefits, or generally to curtail the court's powers. This is not just conservative court-bashing. Professor Mark Tushnet, a leader in critical legal studies, has recently published *Taking the Constitution Away From the Courts*. People across the political spectrum are recognizing that judicial tyranny jeopardizes democracy.

Second, the legislature could cave and legalize same-sex marriage. This is the outcome the plaintiffs hope for. Mary Bonauto, of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, co-counsel in the *Baker* case, expects the lawmakers to "conclude the only way to [comply with the court's ruling] is to include same-sex couples in the civil marriage laws." But legislators read the polls, and none of them seems eager to take such an undeniable political risk.

Finally, the legislature could accommodate the court. It could adopt some form of benefits legislation, either extending to same-sex partners the benefits now enjoyed by married couples or extending those benefits more broadly. Why, after all, limit benefits to couples? Under the reasoning of Vermont's supreme court, there seems to be no principled basis for doing so. If two child-rearers are better than one, why aren't three better than two? Or four better than three?

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Meanwhile, Vermont's example will inspire others. Already Oregon's court of appeals has held that some same-sex couples have a constitutional right to spousal benefits. Oregon is ripe for a Vermont-type lawsuit. In both Alaska and Hawaii, where amendments designed to head off same-sex marriage have been added to the state constitutions, public arguments are being made for the if-not-marriage-then-benefits approach. This is ideal for politicians who want to be in favor both of marriage and of benefits.

In the long run, however, that course is politically and legally unstable. Both sides understand this. It is possible to have a legal regime that prohibits some relationships, permits others, and promotes still others (as in France). But even this requires the people to decide whether they are willing to draw distinctions: Which family arrangements merit legal recognition and which don't? Our country will either reaffirm marriage as a unique social institution based on the union of a man and a woman—grounded in history, tradition, and human nature—or it will follow the attempt of the Vermont supreme court to redefine marriage.

If the latter course is chosen, it is possible to foresee a day—advocated by some libertarians—when all family arrangements are strictly matters of private contract. Or marriage may become a private term, and we may all become domestic partners in the eyes of the law.

But for now, we can still assert what the Vermont court denied: Marriage, understood as the union of a man and a woman, is fully consistent with a commitment to personal liberty and equality before the law. This is what the voters in Alaska and Hawaii decided, and the constitutional amendments they adopted stand unchallenged. This is the dominant opinion in the country and the position of *all* the presidential candidates. If marriage is built into human nature, then our laws can affirm this truth.

We can tolerate those with whom we disagree and whose actions we question. We can accept some rights claims and reject others and still live together as one republic. But if we replace marriage with neutral notions of "couples" and "commitments" out of a mistaken understanding of equality, it will be our ruin sooner or later. The Vermont court has moved us further in that direction. ♦

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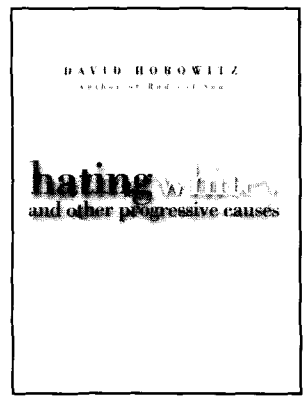

"Indignant Sanity"

"Horowitz is as much despised among [racial intellectuals] as Whittaker Chambers was at Georgetown dinner parties during the Alger Hiss case years ago. Among racial intellectuals, Horowitz is "Not Our Class, Dear." *Hating Whitey*—with its inflammatory title—deserves a reading. Horowitz is angry and polemical, but he is also a clear and ruthless thinker. What he says has an indignant sanity about it. For cautionary perspective in an argument like this, it pays to remember that Hiss was guilty and Chambers was right."

—*TIME* Magazine 9/22/99

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The GOP and Campaign Finance

The Democrats are vulnerable, but Republicans are timid. Can't they do more than just say no to reform?

By Robert D. Novak

Campaign finance reform is one of the issues that the Democrats will seek to capitalize on in 2000, targeting Republicans for resisting any change. It's very much like the tax issue. If the Republicans don't have an alternative to present, they play into the Democrats' hands.

Making the Republicans' timidity on this issue worse, the Democrats, in the era of the Clinton-Gore abuses, are drenched in hypocrisy—witness Mrs. Clinton's record-breaking accumulation of soft money. Yet it's hard for Republicans to condemn this hypocrisy when they are immobilized on campaign finance reform—saying nothing, doing nothing, trying their best to block every proposal for change.

The Republicans need to emerge from their total opposition to any serious reform, because the signs are that they will suffer for it. They fought a losing battle in the House in 1998, while managing to stop action in the Senate, but it isn't clear they can continue to block all action—let alone win the political contest. So instead of fighting, they would be better off devising a workable plan of their own. Being anti-everything cannot help the Republican cause.

• • •

In the campaign finance fights after the Republicans took control of Congress in 1994, the Democrats vigorously pressed to limit all kinds of campaign contributions—except those from organized labor, which, of course, is very good for them. (This followed little or no interest in campaign finance reform by Democratic leaders in the 1970s and 1980s, when they controlled Congress.) The Republicans, after some tossing and turning to find a rationale for the existing system, which they saw as giving them an advantage, seized on the First Amendment with this argument: Contributing money to a political campaign is a form of speech, and it is unconstitutional to limit free speech. The Supreme Court endorsed this view in *Buckley* v. *Valeo* (1976), and it remains the law of the land.

Court rulings and constitutional arguments notwithstanding, my sense is that people are appalled by the state of campaign finance in America today. Is this an issue that disturbs them night after night, day after day? Certainly not. But you have a situation where the Republicans, who put themselves forward as a reform party in 1994, look less and less like a reform party by stonewalling on this issue.

If the Republicans are truly going to change things—bringing us less government, less spending, less regulation—they had better have clean hands. They cannot be seen as the lackeys of the special interests that will benefit from these changes. And to have clean hands, they have to propose a meaningful reform of the way we finance campaigns.

The system now in place, which was created by the 1974 campaign reforms in reaction to Watergate, is a classic case of unintended consequences. The 1974 law spawned political action committees (PACs), which became another means to increase the influence of special interests in federal elections. And the law's rigid, non-indexed $1,000 limit on contributions has made it difficult to finance a campaign. A $1,000 contribution today is worth less than one-third of what $1,000 was worth 25 years ago—not only because of inflation, but also because television is a much more important part of the equation than it was back then.

If it were up to me, I'd remove the limits altogether. But that won't happen. Meantime, the loopholes in the

Robert D. Novak is a syndicated columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times. *This article is adapted from his forthcoming book,* Completing the Revolution: Ten Things Republicans Can Do to Win *(Free Press).*

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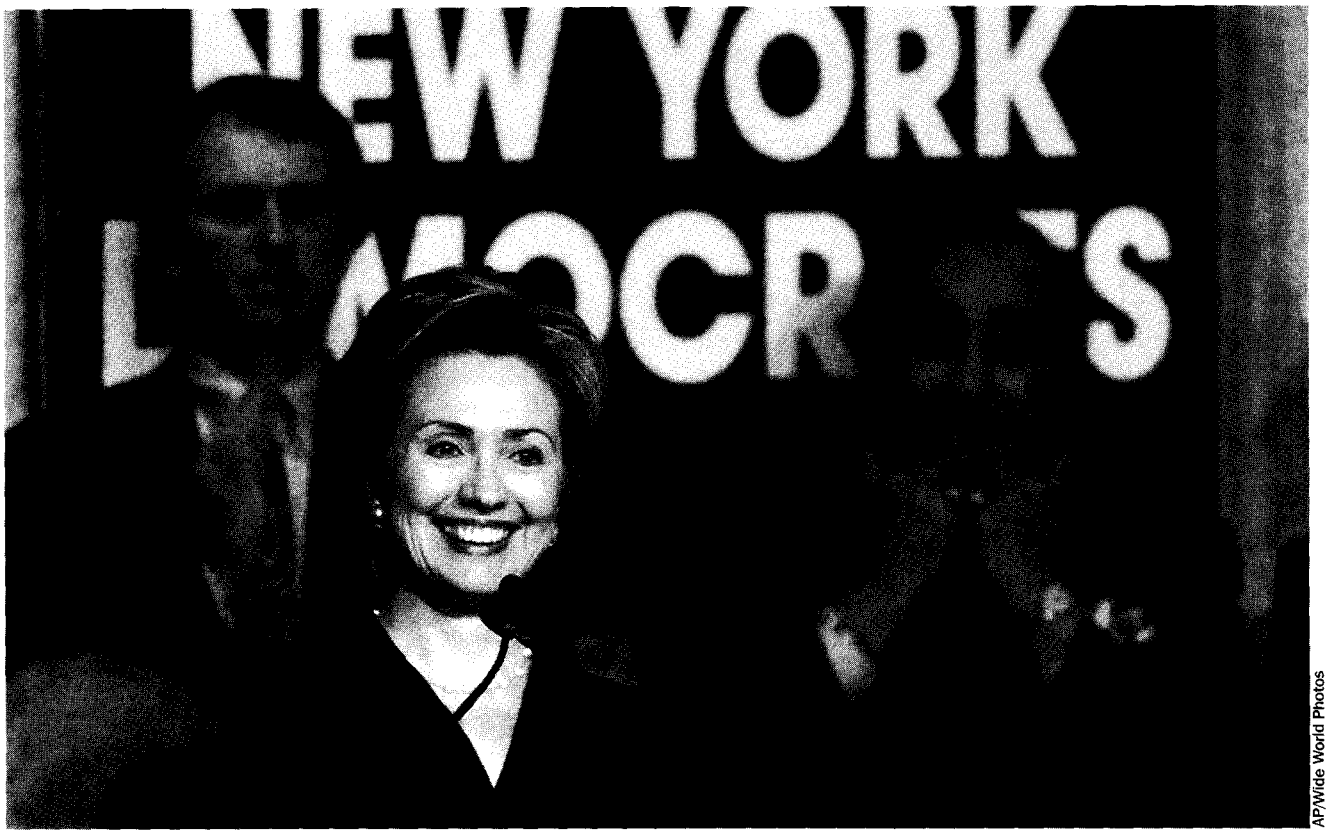

AP/Wide World Photos

The Hillary-for-Senate campaign has benefited from especially creative money arrangements.

current system for so-called soft money have created tremendous slush funds of special-interest cash. Soft money can be given in unlimited sums, so long as it is not spent on a particular candidate's campaign. This has ushered in abuses common in both parties but spectacularly illustrated by Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign for senator from New York. A joint committee set up by Mrs. Clinton's campaign and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee simultaneously solicits capped donations to her campaign and unlimited soft-money donations to be spent on her behalf. This arrangement allows corporations to make otherwise illegal contributions, and wealthy donors to contribute far more than the legal limit for direct gifts to a candidate. While the cap on individual donations is $1,000 for the primary and $1,000 for the general election, contributions to this "New York Senate 2000" committee are often in the tens of thousands of dollars, and many come from places like Texas, California, and Mrs. Clinton's native Chicago.

One Republican who has tried to stake out a reformist position is senator John McCain of Arizona, who joined forces with Democratic senator Russell Feingold of Wisconsin to sponsor a comprehensive campaign finance bill in 1998. A big problem with the McCain-Feingold bill is that McCain, in his eagerness to get campaign reform passed, bought into what could be called the union waiver: Labor PACs are effectively exempted from the limits imposed on business and industry PACs, which tilts the playing field unfairly to the Democrats' advantage. If the unions don't get hurt very much, it's not really reform. In 1999, McCain said he would insist on new labor union restrictions, specifically a variant of "paycheck protection" to bar involuntary deductions from a worker's pay for political contributions, adding that the same protection should apply to corporate shareholders.

The question is, can the two parties put together something that really hits on labor?

Representative Linda Smith of Washington state was a conservative Republican who favored campaign finance reform, and as such, she was "adopted" by a left-leaning coalition put together by Common Cause. When she advocated paycheck protection, Republicans immediately endorsed the idea. Her new Democratic and liberal friends dropped her flat.

Nor did the Republican endorsement of paycheck protection manifest a serious endorsement of reform. Senate majority leader Trent Lott and his close ally, senator

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Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, made clear that their amendments to McCain-Feingold limiting labor PACs were meant to be "poison pills." They were intended not to improve the bill, but to kill it by forcing the Democrats to vote against the entire reform. They said this openly, thereby conceding that they're not very serious about finding a way to real reform.

McConnell, the chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, has taken a maximalist position in refusing to countenance any change in the current system. Even his rhetoric is apocalyptic: "Take away 'soft money' and we wouldn't be in the majority in the House and the majority in the Senate and couldn't win back the White House," he said in April 1999. "Hell's going to freeze over before we get rid of soft money."

I just can't agree with him. Are Republican ideas so unpopular that the party must rely on an increasingly suspect system of raising money to keep itself in power? I'm not prepared to cede the high ground to the Democrats, and neither should any conservative. Granted, provisions of the original McCain-Feingold bill (before it was watered down in October 1999)—restricting voting guides that rate members of Congress and limiting public utterances by private groups in the final weeks of a campaign—went much too far and were skewed against conservatives. But by holding to an intransigent position, Republicans take themselves out of the game.

Are Republican ideas so unpopular that the party must rely on an increasingly suspect system of raising money to keep itself in power?

There is a small but growing number of Republicans who say that although the system of financing we have may produce a lot of Republican money, it is not helping the Republican party as much as people like Lott and McConnell think.

Linda Smith was a lonely conservative Republican reformer during her four years in Congress (1995-98). She proposed to limit campaign contributions to those coming from the candidate's state or district, so that candidates could no longer run to New York and California for the big money. That idea had been suggested previously by the influential Vin Weber, a congressman-turned-lobbyist serving on a Republican campaign finance advisory board, but it generated no interest from either party.

This would be a valuable reform in cleaning up politics. The purists say that it hurts the First Amendment, but I don't know how pure they really are. From what I can see, they are the ones benefiting from the current system, and they can't see the bigger picture: Rejection of all campaign finance reform is hurting the Republican party and its cause.

Chuck Hagel, a first-term senator from Nebraska, has said that the system has to change. It didn't help the Republican party all that much in 1992 or 1996, he says, and the party will have to clean up the system if it is to regain the high ground.

Hagel was encouraged by a lot of people in the Senate Republican caucus, including some very senior committee chairmen, to run against McConnell's reelection as chairman of the campaign committee. They argued that somebody had to take the blame for failing to win Senate seats in 1998. Since they did not feel comfortable trying to punish Lott for failing to establish a Republican agenda in his leadership of the Senate, it had to be McConnell. He had raised piles of money to no other purpose than burnishing the GOP's money-grubbing reputation.

But when Hagel ran, he got only 13 votes, to 39 for McConnell. Welcome to Washington! This proved yet again how hard it is to accomplish reform within the culture of the congressional parties.

Campaign finance reform represents an important opportunity for the Republicans, but it would have to be championed by somebody outside Washington who could stand behind a plan that really did reform the system, without a clear benefit for either side. It would have to restrict labor, but it would also have to restrict soft money from corporations.

Let me be clear: It's not going to be easy to bring around the party leadership to this point of view after so many years. It's all a matter of how much the Republicans want to be a real radical reform party. The voters are looking more and more for candidates with clean hands, and to have clean hands, the Republicans have to get rid of the PAC/soft-money system.

I think there's a lot of merit to that position. Eliminating PACs and soft money would make for a better system, and it would help the Republicans in the presidential campaign if they could say that they support anti-regulatory, low-tax positions not because they are getting big PAC checks, but because they believe in the merits of their case.

The Republicans also would be well advised to come out against all the subsidies that parties and candidates receive from the government. Consider the $3 checkoff

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for financing the presidential campaign that's on everyone's federal income tax form. Every year, the number of people who say that they want their money to finance elections keeps declining: from 27.5 percent in 1976, when the checkoff began, to 12.5 percent in 1997, the last year for which IRS statistics are available. The percentage drops a little every year.

But Congress keeps appropriating the money, and a lot of people don't know that this $3 checkoff heavily subsidizes the national conventions of both parties: $12 million for each. The Republicans obviously don't want to give up that money, but I think it would be a daring political move for them to do so. They might have to hold a slightly less glitzy convention, but they would come across as a reform-minded party. There were hints that they might take that step in 1996, but these never reached fruition.

I know that historically it is uncharacteristic for the Republicans to be a reform party, but they are confronted with a great opportunity if they choose to seize it. A reform party appeals to swing voters, who respect politicians who put their money where their mouth is. And the GOP should not ignore the Reform party constituency—voters attracted to candidates as dissimilar as Ross Perot, Jesse Ventura, and Pat Buchanan, all of whom call for the existing campaign finance system to be demolished.

Congress is compromised by the pervasive influence of lobbyists in Washington. Lobbyists sit in on strategy sessions; they are particularly involved in campaign finance. Every major presidential candidate of either party has people in the lobbyist community attending his planning sessions. A high-powered lobbying firm, if it's a Republican firm, will have a person involved in, and raising money for, each prospective GOP nominee's campaign. If it's a bipartisan firm, it's going to have representatives in both parties.

George W. Bush, for example, early in 1999 called for "Pioneers"—people who would promise to raise $100,000 each for his campaign. Lobbyists are likely to know enough potential contributors to raise $100,000 in contributions no larger than $1,000 per person. The lobbyist-Pioneer, pledging $100,000, goes down to Austin and meets Bush, or at the very least the people around him, and makes invaluable contacts. The lobbyists are intimately and inextricably involved in the campaign finance issue.

This process is not a good thing—not for the country or for the party. The economist Milton Friedman often has said that we will never be able to reform the tax code because the lobbying industry has a symbiotic relationship with the politicians: The lobbyists give contributions to the congressmen, and the congressmen do the bidding of the lobbyists. Just as there is a built-in constituency on the Hill against tax reform, so there is a built-in constituency against campaign finance reform.

To break their hold on Congress, we have to get limitations on PACs in congressional and presidential campaigns. And if we can require that candidates raise 70 percent or 80 percent of their campaign money in their own state or district, this will greatly reduce the impact of lobbyists on legislation and on the priorities of the Republican party.

In the summer of 1995, Linda Smith (who was nominated for Congress in 1994 on a write-in) pledged to cheering delegates at Ross Perot's convention in Dallas that she would clean up the campaign finance mess. A few months later, she was deeply depressed.

"If you don't stop the flow of money to Congress," Smith told me that autumn, "people will think that everything we do is attached back to the money of the special interests. I've been here ten months, and I'm fed up. I see many of my freshman friends getting used to the stink—forgetting what they came here for." She told me that Newt Gingrich and the other Republican leaders had lied to her when they promised campaign reform. Gingrich was furious when I quoted her in my newspaper column.

By 1997, the Republicans had solidly turned against campaign reform, accepting Mitch McConnell's argument that losing the millions of dollars would mean electoral disaster for the GOP, and Linda Smith was a pariah. In 1998, in the midst of a losing campaign for the Senate in which the support given her by campaign chairman McConnell was lukewarm at best, Smith accused Republican leaders of holding up action on a bill in order to milk more campaign contributions. "Isn't that extortion?" she asked.

Corporate lobbyists wanted nothing to do with Smith or her unsuccessful 1998 Senate campaign against liberal Democratic senator Patty Murray. Neither did conservative voting groups, despite her flawless voting record on their issues. She had a perfect score in opposing abortion, but the National Right to Life Committee did not endorse her because she supported campaign reform (although the organization's state committee in Washington did back her). Conversely, the national committee supported members of Congress with flawed abortion records because they opposed campaign reform. It was a classic case of Republicans and their supporters confusing what they had come to Washington to achieve. ♦

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McCain and Able

"You're kidding me. All this McCain and able stuff," he began.

"No. Just asking is McCain able?"

"Able about what?" he thrust at me.

"Is John McCain able to sell George W. on a good idea? Would George W. listen? McCain says to Bush, "Look, George, you run for president I'll run for your vice president. The polls favor you."

"Are you crazy?" my friend exploded.

"I'm saying the American people have had eight long years with the Great Prevaricator."

"So?"

"Well, John McCain and George W. become a team, George W. for president, McCain for vice president. It's new. It's in the open. It's long in advance of the Republican Convention. There are no smoke-filled rooms, no deals, no hanky panky, no lies, no scandal, as straight American as popcorn or a hot-dog."

"It's not been tried before; that is, it hasn't happened often," my friend said.

"That's just it. The people see a team. Gore and Bradley go at one another hammer and tongs. People are confused. Whom do they believe? It's no team. It's a power struggle, confusing and troubling."

"What if George W. slips? What if John McCain forges into the lead? Then what?"

"The same. Is John McCain able? Is he able to get George W. to switch places. McCain for president, Bush for vice president. It's still a team and not 'a power struggle.'"

"Then?"

"What's dangerous is that Gore and Bradley might steal this idea and get there first."

"Could be," he replied.

"It's all in the open," I continued. "Everything is openly arrived at. Often, Americans understand things better than their leaders. They want their leaders to understand them."

"Watch out that the Great Prevaricator doesn't try this idea on for size. We get gored because someone gave Bill a hot tipper," my friend warned.

All I could think to say was "Amen."

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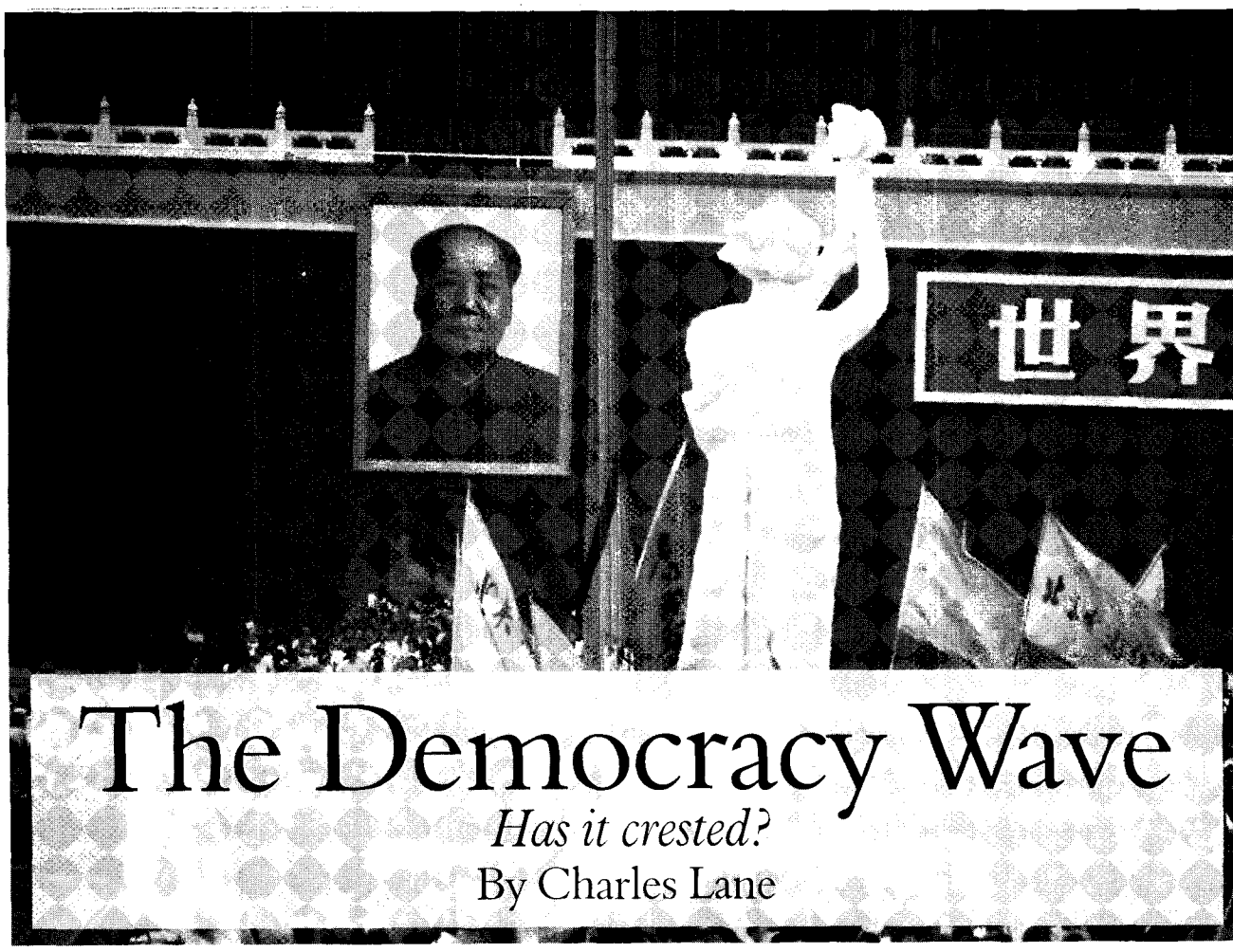

The goddess of democracy in Tiananmen Sq., 1989. UPI/Corbis-Bettmann.

The Democracy Wave

Has it crested?

By Charles Lane

For more than fifteen years, between the fall of Portugal's dictatorship in 1974 and the 1989-91 collapse of the Soviet empire, the world experienced a great, multi-continent wave of democratization. Now, though, the wave appears to have crested. International news is dominated by stories of democratic decay: rising anti-Western sentiment and internal war in Russia, the ascent of an ex-military demagogue to the presidency of Venezuela, coups in Pakistan and the Ivory Coast. Prospects for self-government in the world's first and fourth largest countries, China and Indonesia, are uncertain at best. In Serbia, Cuba, Burma, North Korea, most of sub-Saharan Africa, and almost the entire Arab World, the prospects are dimmer still.

This is a problem for the United States. The Cold War is over, but the consolidation and expansion of international democracy remains manifestly in America's foreign policy interest. That interest is partly moral: We desire to see other countries secure the freedoms we cherish. It is partly economic: Free politics and free markets go together, and free-market societies make the best trading partners. But, to an underappreciated degree, the American national interest in global democratization is a matter of old-fashioned, politico-military "realism" as well. Democracies tend not to go to war with one another, much less with us. And faltering democracy tends to incubate anti-Americanism. Venezuela's new president, for example, Lt. Col. Hugo Chavez, has been cozying up to Castro's Cuba and the Marxist FARC guerrillas in Colombia.

Charles Lane is editor-at-large of the New Republic.

Aiding Democracy Abroad
The Learning Curve
by Thomas Carothers
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,
412 pp., $39.95

Developing Democracy
Toward Consolidation
by Larry Diamond
Johns Hopkins University Press,
392 pp., $49.95

In short, the global march of freedom this past quarter century has been a huge national security windfall for the United States, and even its partial reversal would be a significant defeat. The question, then, is not whether the United States should promote democracy abroad, but how.

Anyone inclined to believe that the democracy-promotion programs currently sponsored by the U.S. government represent a sufficient response to this challenge should read Thomas Carothers's new book. Carothers was a Reagan administration State Department official and is now vice president for global policy at the Carnegie Endowment. He is a sympathetic student of American efforts to spread and sustain self-government overseas. But he is also a rigorous one. So while his forecast remains hopeful, his judgment on the present state of those efforts is unsparing: U.S. spending on international democracy—some $700 million per year, by Carothers's reckoning—is ineffectual at best and counterproductive at worst.

As *Aiding Democracy Abroad* explains, the democracy-promotion effort—and its attendant bureaucra-

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cy—emerged from the 1980s battle over U.S. intervention against communism in Latin America. The Reagan administration, responding to liberal criticism that its support for right-wing regimes failed to address the underlying causes of left-wing revolution, agreed with Congress to launch a variety of pro-democracy efforts—everything from training police and judges to funding election monitors. That work has survived the Cold War and exists today as an even larger panoply of programs designed to help build democratic systems in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. A host of agencies have a piece of this pie: the National Endowment for Democracy, the State and Justice departments, the Agency for International Development—even the Pentagon, which justifies its training of foreign soldiers as a bid to inculcate respect for independent, civil authorities.

Carothers argues, convincingly, that the chief conceptual flaw of these programs is the strange (and unacknowledged) assumption that fashioning a new political system can be an apolitical exercise. Factional, ideological, economic, and personal factors shape the performance of politicians, journalists, policy advocates, and judges in an emerging democracy—just as in a fully developed one. But, all too often, the democracy-promotion bureaucracy back in Washington ignores such subtleties in favor of the shallowest form of missionary work: sending Americans, qualified by little more than their own citizenship in a democracy, quickly in and out of some country to "train" the natives.

I've been there. In 1996, Nicaragua was preparing for its second national election since 1990, when the democratic opposition had toppled the Sandinistas. Washington wanted the coming election to be seen as free, fair, and legitimate, with maximum participation by an informed public. So the United States Information Agency (USIA) planned a weeklong series of seminars and lectures for the local media in Nicaragua—about how to cover a political campaign. And I was selected to deliver them. I hadn't actually spent much time covering campaigns. But I did speak Spanish and I had been to Nicaragua as a foreign correspondent, so USIA was only too happy to fly me down.

I stayed in a gorgeous hotel, ate at the very best steakhouses, and met with a series of Nicaraguan journalists who struck me as earnest and determined to professionalize their country's media. And I was beginning to think my little visit was really having an impact until the conclusion of a meeting with reporters our embassy considered the best and most honest in Managua. After listening politely to my ringing calls for tough, issue-oriented reportage, one mischievous member of the audience raised his hand and asked: "So, how much does it cost to bribe a reporter in the United States?" The room erupted in mordant laughter, and the point was clear: I would soon return home, and underpaid writers in virtually lawless Nicaragua would stay behind—where they would continue to be routinely bought off.

The conceptual flaw of much democracy-building activity is the assumption that it can be an apolitical exercise.

Carothers's book is full of anecdotes like mine, all of which underscore the perverse consequences—even the smidgen of corruption—that plague democracy-promotion programs around the world. New "nongovernmental organizations" in emerging democracies, which are supposed to embody some independent, indigenous interest in the target country, generally can't survive without funding from a U.S. or other Western source. Support for political parties Washington regards as pro-democratic is inevitably tainted as foreign favoritism. Exchange missions from developing countries to modern capitals often teach exactly the wrong lessons: Nepalese parliamentarians were so impressed by a trip to the parliament in Copenhagen, Carothers reports, that back in Katmandu they began stealing from the public till to buy the faxes, computers, and fancy furniture they'd seen in the offices of their Danish counterparts. And so on.

Carothers believes democracy aid can be salvaged—hence the "learning curve" of his book's title. He thinks there will be better results over the next few decades if democracy promoters temper their ambitions, take a greater interest in the local politics of beneficiary countries, and pay more attention to building democratic attitudes and processes (and less to the care and feeding of select client groups). One hopes Carothers is right. But it remains an open question whether American politics can engineer so sophisticated and long-term a commitment as he envisions, especially since Carothers himself concedes that even the best-designed and best-run democracy programs will have incremental effects, not "dramatic" ones.

Why that might be is apparent in *Developing Democracy*, Hoover Institution sociologist Larry Diamond's systematic account of the political realities that make democracy promotion so challenging. Diamond, too, maintains an optimistic mood about his subject. And he marshals an impressive array of cross-cultural social-science evidence, some of which seems to justify that mood. Particularly important is Diamond's demonstration that neither culture nor economic development necessarily poses an obstacle to democratization. Notwithstanding Singaporean dictator Lee Kwan Yew's self-justifying rhetoric about immutable "Asian values," Taiwan and South Korea have made rapid and dramatic political progress. In Africa, impoverished Mali is also consolidating a democratic regime, as is South Africa.

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What's more, one clearly helpful policy implication emerges from Diamond's comparative analysis. Studies show that in both Asia and Europe, education appears to be positively correlated with the entrenchment of democratic ideals—more so, perhaps, than any other single factor. Which would seem to suggest that, if our goal is to foster long-term democratic development, the United States and other democracies should alter our budgets, reducing support for political parties and opposition newspapers and giving those dollars to schools instead. As a foreign-aid mission, advancing literacy and numeracy is relatively well-understood and politically anodyne—particularly when compared with the more sensitive task of, say, underwriting parliamentarians.

But, curiously, *Developing Democracy* doesn't stop to recommend a major Western effort to promote basic education in emerging democracies. Diamond's principal concern, one shared by Thomas Carothers, is to establish the distinction between merely "electoral" and truly "liberal" democratic systems. An electoral democracy's government changes hands by means of periodic popular ballots—and that's about as recognizably democratic as it gets. A liberal democracy boasts not only regular elections, but also a reasonably transparent legal system, a high degree of interpersonal trust and tolerance, developed political parties, high rates of citizen participation, a free and responsible press, strong grass-roots advocacy organizations, and so on. In short, all the desiderata of democracy-promotion programs.

Here Diamond's evidence becomes more sobering—and less clear in its implications. The vast majority of the world's recently established democracies, he argues, are still in their "electoral" phase and will remain so until they are "considered legitimate by all major sections of their population." That degree of legitimization, in turn, largely depends on improving a new democracy's "political performance" until it is comparable to that achieved

UPI/Corbis-Bettmann

Violeta Chamorro, campaigning in Nicaragua, 1990.

in the highly institutionalized polities of Western Europe and North America. And improved political performance is itself a function of many variables—economic growth, culture, individual attitudes—all of which are constantly interacting in unpredictable ways, and none of which is particularly easy for outsiders to influence, let alone engineer.

Now, it is undoubtedly better to live in a liberal democracy than an illiberal one. Both are better than no democracy at all. And modern political science is quite adept at specifying these distinctions. What political science *can't* quite seem to do, however, is answer the question of how to move up the scale from latter to former. Consider Diamond's cautious discussion of China, which he rightly identifies as the most important piece of contested political terrain remaining in the world. "All that can be said in confidence [sic] now is that China is starting to liberalize politically as it crosses the threshold of $2,500 per capita income," he writes. "Sooner or later, economic development will generate growing pressures (and possibilities) for China to make a more definitive regime change, to democracy." But this "crisis" could "just as likely" lead to some new form of authoritarianism, or civil disorder, or even a "ruthless crackdown." Who knows?

Developing Democracy's reluctance (or inability) to predict China's future is understandable, of course. But it does reveal a paradox of the "developmental" approach to political freedom. Larry Diamond and Thomas Carothers both correctly insist that true, liberal democracy requires a highly active, organized citizenry, as well as increasingly responsive public institutions. Yet both also acknowledge that pressure for better political performance can destabilize rather than consolidate a fledgling government. Unrealistic expectations—especially about economic growth—can overwhelm and delegitimize a new democratic government, thus inviting nostalgia for some erstwhile strongman regime.

Again, then: How are we to strike the balance? How, precisely, does American foreign policy best involve itself in the question whether democracy arises in other countries—and, once established, whether it stands or falls, develops or decays? Perhaps the discussion needs to range more widely than the political science literature ordinarily does. Perhaps, while our policymakers are busy learning more about the intricacies of local politics in this or that foreign capital, they should also pay renewed attention to the global context of democratization.

Over the past hundred years, the world has passed through a great and fateful battle of ideas. Three contenders laid claim to the mantle of political legitimacy: democracy, fas-

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cism, and communism. They struggled not only in a figurative, ideological sense, but literally: in wars, hot and cold, that cost humanity an ocean of blood. It was an awful price. But the result—achieved in large part with American military muscle—was a dramatic international expansion of democracy. Two of today's most firmly consolidated liberal democracies, Germany and Japan, were directly conquered by the United States—at a time when neither had a strong liberal democratic tradition. And, protected by the promise or reality of American force and assistance, they and other democracies were able to take root, survive, and consolidate throughout the Cold War.

Vietnam is the obvious exception that proves the rule, an American defeat that probably retarded democratization by emboldening pro-Soviet movements around the world. But it is otherwise difficult to imagine the democratization of Spain, Portugal, and Greece in the absence of NATO's security umbrella over Western Europe. U.S. fighter jets were deployed to help stave off a military coup in the Philippines. The presence of American soldiers along Korea's 38th parallel gave Washington leverage to press for a democratic opening in Seoul. Panama would now be a military dictatorship if not for President Bush's 1989 invasion. Not to mention Ronald Reagan's rescue of little Grenada in 1983 or Bill Clinton's flawed but defensible occupation of Haiti in 1994.

Even the much-maligned Reagan administration policies toward Central America deserve some credit for promoting the recent democratization of that region—albeit in ironic and sometimes unintended ways. The standard criticism was true enough: The Nicaraguan contras and the rightist governments of El Salvador and Honduras got millions of dollars in U.S. military aid—and were guilty of indefensible human rights violations. But it is not true that the alternative was some kind of clean passage to democracy, negotiated with a purely democratic opposition. The Marxist Left in Latin America was armed and financed by Fidel Castro, and Cuba-model dictatorships probably would have become entrenched had the United States simply kept its hands off.

Here, and elsewhere, American military aid to anti-Communist forces in the 1980s had a double effect. It gave the United States a measure of moderating influence over the behavior and ideology of its allies. And it helped wear down the Soviet Union and decisively weakened the guerrilla movements that the Soviets and Cubans sponsored. The net effect was a gradual reduction of political polarization, hot spot by hot spot, and greater space for democrats and democracy. The phenomenon is more than theoretical; Larry Diamond and Thomas Carothers both identify El Salvador, for example, as a place where democratic values are relatively well-entrenched, despite continuing high rates of crime and poverty—and despite its horrific recent experience of civil war. Indeed, democracy may be so firmly established in El Salvador precisely because of the chastening experience of bloody internal strife.

"Soft power"—foreign aid, trade, and other persuasive tools—may not be enough to consolidate new democracies abroad.

Thanks to American power, then, fascism and communism have been mostly vanquished. The remaining task is to remove them where they linger (China, North Korea, Cuba, Iraq, Serbia), and to cope with or overcome other ideologically based obstacles to democracy—like Islamic fundamentalism, the "Asian values" canard, and the tribal and ethnic strife that bedevil the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. It may take more than a century to handle all of this unfinished business. But, if the United States is serious about defending and consolidating democracy, it will have to identify democracy's enemies and oppose them, both with the force of our ideas and, where necessary, with just plain force.

In short, what Joseph Nye has called "soft power"—foreign aid, trade, and the other persuasive tools which Carothers and Diamond emphasize—may not be enough. "Hard power," the maintenance of a strong U.S. military and a network of global security commitments and alliances capable of protecting democracies and resisting aggressive dictatorships, will surely continue to play an indispensable role. Doubters need only ask themselves whether democracy in Taiwan, South Korea, or even Japan would be stabilized or destabilized by a U.S. pullout from East Asia—where China increasingly flexes its military muscles.

Diamond and Carothers both make eloquent arguments that the United States can help consolidate emerging democracies by better fulfilling its exemplary role: by cleaning up its own democratic act at home. The "demonstration effect" of successful, stable self-government in America, they reason, has proved powerful in the past. So it should prove powerful in the future, as well: The more we do to root out domestic ills like police brutality and crooked campaign financing, the more credibility we will confer on democrats abroad who urge their fellow citizens to emulate us.

Let us never stop trying to perfect our own politics, whose example surely has helped inspire would-be democrats across the globe. Just the same, there are reasons to remain skeptical about how much this particular demonstration effect can accomplish. One is historical: The world's most recent wave of democratization began in the mid-1970s, at a time when

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America was just emerging from Vietnam, Watergate, and segregation—and just about to enter a period of brutal stagflation. To a great many people at home and abroad, it appeared that American democracy was altogether too rotten to compete with the Soviet Union. A whole Third World generation gravitated to radical and revolutionary doctrines as a result. But *still* the democrats of Portugal, Spain, and Greece—and later, of Latin America and much of Asia—carried the day. How America looked from a distance was, ultimately, a secondary issue. The example of democratizing neighboring states surely weighed heavier.

What's more, any demonstration effect is inherently subjective. Is America's system of campaign finance really a symptom of political rot, as Diamond and Carothers seem to believe so strongly? Or is it simply the result of an irreconcilable conflict between equally valid democratic ideals: a maximal amount of free (and expensive) political speech, on the one hand, and a level political playing field of unimpeachable integrity, on the other? Voters, legislatures, and courts have been wrestling with this question for twenty-five years and haven't managed to settle it.

The bottom line is that no matter how good an example we set, and no matter how genuine the reforms we adopt, anti-democratic forces will always find reasons to condemn us and, by extension, democracy itself. In such a world, the best "demonstration effect" on behalf of democracy may remain a United States prepared to support even flawed democracies with force when they are threatened—so that they might meet the first test of democratic consolidation: survival. With enough economic growth and political experience, these flawed democracies may further liberalize. But that takes time. And it is hard to be patient unless you are secure in the knowledge that the world's most powerful country will, if necessary, fight for the modest, ennobling proposition that democracy is the worst political system known to man, except for all the others. ♦

The Lebanon war, June 1982. All photos: Norton.

Debunking Israel

In the guise of demythologizing, the "new historians" create their own myths.

BY AMITAI ETZIONI

In preparation for Thanksgiving, Public School 87 in New York City teaches fourth graders what it felt like to be a Native American when the Pilgrims arrived: "Strange-looking people" came and "ransacked our houses, cut down our trees, killed our pets and took our tomatoes." In Arlington, Virginia, kids learn about the "brutality" of the Pilgrims. But much of the rest of the nation has been spared.

The Iron Wall
Israel and the Arab World
by Avi Shlaim
Norton, 670 pp., $32.50

Righteous Victims
A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999
by Benny Morris
Knopf, 751 pp., $40

In Israel, by contrast, beginning this school year, ninth graders are being taught what it felt like to be a Palestinian Arab living in Jaffa or Jerusalem when the first Zionist settlers arrived. This lesson is part of a deliberate drive to change the national consciousness. New textbooks, in use nationwide, as well as an extensive series on Zionist and Israeli history on public television, call into question previously sacred Israeli tenets: that Jewish immigrants to Palestine settled largely on swamps they drained, hillsides they cleared, or land they bought at full price from Arabs; that the settlers sought to live in peace with the "natives"; and that they would have been content to accept various compromises dividing Palestine between a Jewish and an Arab state—a plan scuttled by the Arabs time and again. Instead, children are being exposed to an "alternate narrative," according to which Jews drove Arabs off their land and rejected numerous peace feelers from Arab leaders. Far from defending themselves heroically, the Israelis are now said merely to have exploited their military superiority in their numerous confrontations with the surrounding Arab nations.

Superficially, these new teachings mandated by the minister of education reflect the rising influence of a new

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group of largely leftist Israeli historians, often referred to as revisionists. They have gained much power over the Israeli education establishment as well as the media. The revisionists include more than a dozen figures, ranging from the relatively moderate Benny Morris, a professor at Ben-Gurion University, to Ilan Pappe, an immoderate Marxist. Somewhere in between is Avi Shlaim, a professor of international relations at Oxford. The works of these and other revisionists spilled out of academe into the public debate and deeply influenced a group of educators working in the government of Yitzhak Rabin. This group continued quietly to develop the new curriculum under the administration of Bibi Netanyahu and introduced it this year, during the administration of Ehud Barak. While neither Rabin nor Barak endorsed the new viewpoint, both tolerated the antics of the Left for narrow political reasons.

Two major works of revisionist Israeli history have just been published in English. Benny Morris's book is comparatively scholarly and relatively free of overt editorializing and spin. It covers, battle by battle, more than a hundred years of Zionist settlement in Palestine and Israel, up to 1997. Morris's thesis is that the clash between Jews and Palestinians is the clash of two rights; both sides are victims of the situation.

Avi Shlaim builds his new book around an argument made by the dissident Zionist Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the 1920s. Jabotinsky argued that Palestine was not a land without people, looking for a people without a land, as some of the original Zionists naively assumed. Hence, a protracted fight between the settlers and the native people was inevitable. He further maintained that the Jewish settlers must steel themselves, act resolutely, and focus on their self-interest without sentimental attention to others—before the Arabs would be ready to work out a compromise. Shlaim claims that this paradigm, consciously or unwittingly, guided all that followed. Actually, given that the founding fathers and mothers of Israel and most of their followers were social democrats who considered Jabotinsky unacceptably right-wing and fought him and his followers bitterly, this seems implausible.

As a leading Israeli scholar, Anita Shapira, has pointed out, Shlaim, unlike Morris, takes it for granted that the Arabs were the natural occupants of the land, while the Jews were the interlopers. In the process, Shlaim disregards the Jews' historical roots in Palestine and the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jews were driven out of Iraq, Yemen, and North Africa and had to be settled somewhere.

Morris, Shlaim, and the other revisionists draw on documents newly available from the Israeli state archives. These documents do reveal dark moments in Israel's fifty-year history and in the history of the Jewish community that preceded it. For instance, Morris found copies of an order by a low-ranking member of the Palmach commandos, Yitzhak Rabin, expelling the Arab civilian population from Lod and Ramle, two towns blocking what was then the only road from the main parts of Israel to Jerusalem. (I served in the Palmach at the time and can confirm that these expulsions took place.) Morris uses these events to challenge the traditional Israeli claim that the Arabs left voluntarily, hoping to return victorious. Other revisions go much further, citing a few such incidents to argue that by and large Israel was the aggressor, driving Palestinians out of their homes. Ilan Pappe is a strong proponent of this view, arguing that Israel "deliberately uprooted the Palestinian population and justified it on the basis of Jewish uniqueness and as a consequence of the Holocaust."

To be sure, Israel had its My Lai and No Gun Ri. For instance, Morris shows that Deir Yassin was overrun by Jewish forces in 1948 and some—possibly many—of the casualties were inflicted after the town surrendered. There is no denying such events, and they should not be dismissed with the claim that "such things happen in war"; they are morally troubling. However, to exploit them to tar Israel is like claiming that most of the bombs the United States dropped on Kosovo were mistargeted because one of them hit the Chinese embassy, or that the United States should not try to preempt terrorist acts because an American missile hit the wrong chemical factory in Sudan.

Grossly exaggerating the implications of truly distressing facts is the stock in trade of these revisionists, but they are also capable of concocting wholly misleading interpretive frameworks. Shlaim is much better at this sorry business than Morris. In a previous book, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, he depicted Israel as a colonial power conspiring with Jordan to carve up territory that should have been set aside for a Palestinian Arab state. Pappe goes even further; he depicts the Jewish community in Palestine, preceding the formation of Israel, as an extension of Western imperialism, which flourished during the British colonial occupation of the area. In reality, the British played both sides against each other, favoring sometimes one, sometimes the other. Clearly, Zionism is a product of the impulse toward national liberation that swept across Eastern Europe (leading to the formation of several of the Balkan countries out of the Austro-Hungarian empire), then to Asia and Africa. Jews and Arabs fought British colonial rule, just as Indians did, each people seeking to form its own nation. (Indeed, the first target hit by my Palmach unit was a British radar station in Haifa.)

When it comes to military matters, the revisionists reject the traditional view—that the beleaguered Israelis stood up time and again to a vast sea of Arabs. Instead, they claim, the Israelis always enjoyed military superiority. This argument is partly tautological: Given that, so far, Israel has managed to survive, it was superior by definition. In the Israeli War of Independence, however, this superiority was often a matter of dedication and courage, not of arms, as a detailed comparison of the weapons available to both sides shows. Moreover, the Arabs overran several Jewish settlements,

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David Ben-Gurion reading Israel's declaration of independence, May 1948.

including the whole region of Gush Etzion, besieged old Jerusalem, and expelled its Jews. Syria grabbed and kept territory bordering on the sea of Galilee; Egypt occupied Gaza and held onto it for more than a decade.

Some of the reasons given for the recent avalanche of revisionist books are rather superficial, though not necessarily wrong. Rabbi Berel Wein points out that one way for young historians to make a splash is by radically departing from established interpretations. Others note that Israeli professors and intellectuals increasingly view themselves not as the elite of a local community but as members of an international set. They aspire to be accepted by their colleagues in other countries, especially in the West, where leftist and liberal circles have grown more and more critical of Israel, likening its treatment of the Palestinians to South Africa's treatment of blacks under apartheid. For Israelis, championing revisionist views is the ticket to acceptance and respect.

But there is also a deeper reason that revisionists have garnered influence in recent years. Their views feed and are fed by the perspective underlying the Oslo accords, signed in 1993. Though revisionists were writing before the accords, the volume and import of their work has risen since. The recasting of Israeli textbooks in line with their thinking, for example, would have been hard to imagine before Oslo.

The connection between the accords and the revisionist school is profound. From a traditional Israeli standpoint, the idea underlying the accords—exchanging land for peace—means a peace-loving, beleaguered, much-attacked nation making major concessions to a movement driven by terrorists and slow to renounce its goal of destroying the state of Israel and "throwing the Jews into the sea." From this standpoint, Oslo means risking Israel's security by permitting the emergence of a potentially hostile Palestinian state.

In this context, the revisionist position is best understood as an extreme version of the Oslo perspective. If Israel is the aggressor, if it has repeatedly victimized Palestinians rather than been their victim, if one ignores the way Arab countries have driven out Jews and instead focuses on incidents in which Israel has driven out Arabs—then the Oslo concessions become small potatoes, a tardy attempt to right the scales of history. No wonder the revisionists are particularly popular among those leftists who most staunchly support the Oslo agreements—indeed, who would prefer to go much further to correct past injustices against the Arabs. It should be noted, however, that there are many other supporters of the Oslo agreements who favor them for different reasons and are not revisionists. Oslo merely opens the door wide to revisionism.

Most profoundly, Israeli revisionism is linked to a drive to end the Zionist project and revoke the notion that Israel is a Jewish state. Revisionists seek to annul the Law of Return, which allows Jews, and only Jews, who immigrate to Israel to become citizens automatically. Israel, according to these post-Zionists, should become a small Mediterranean country no different in principle from, say, Lebanon. Its citizens would pay taxes and vote, enjoy coffee shops, nightclubs, malls, and other manifestations of affluence, and cherish their civil liberties. But they would not share a culture or purpose, let alone a destiny, with each other or with Jews everywhere. (Some radical revisionists even argue that Jews have no right to seek a homeland, as they do not constitute a single people but instead speak many languages and partake of many cultures.) Here the revisionist drive to de-Judaize Israel coincides with the bitter culture war between Orthodox Jewry and secular liberal groups—with the majority of Israelis caught in between.

If Jewish history teaches us anything, it is that Jews in the diaspora have been threatened with annihilation in one society after another, and that wherever they have been welcomed, they have tended to drown themselves in a sea of cultural and social assimilation. Ergo, if Jewish culture, values, and ultimately existence are to be preserved, there is no alternative to a Jewish state.

If Israel somehow ceased to be a Jewish state, then, a new Zionist movement would be needed to find a safe haven somewhere else for Jewish existence and culture. This is, of course, an absurd idea, given that, after two thousand years of Jewish homelessness and persecution culminating in the Holocaust, and following great sacrifices by Jews and Arabs, there finally is a legitimate Jewish state. True, the state of Israel was destroyed once before. Today, its presence vastly improves the odds for Jewish survival. It would be a tragic irony if this time it were destroyed from within. ♦

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Some Like It Wilder

The belated triumph of a director too hard-bitten for the masses and too direct for critics.

BY DANIEL WATTENBERG

At age ninety-three, Billy Wilder is enjoying what the movies he directed almost never had: a long, triumphal fadeout at the end.

He has received the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award and the Thalberg Award. Every one of his pictures is available on video (except *Ace in the Hole*, the blackest of his black comedies). Last year, four of his films (*Double Indemnity*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Some Like It Hot*, and *The Apartment*) made the AFI's list of the hundred best movies ever made. Ed Sikov's definitive biography, *On Sunset Boulevard: The Life and Times of Billy Wilder*, has been reissued in paperback. The hottest young romantic comedy director in Hollywood, Cameron Crowe (director of *Say Anything . . .* and *Jerry Maguire*) has just published the anecdotal coffee-table book *Conversations with Wilder*, modeled after François Truffaut's similar book on Hitchcock. And *American Beauty*, the most critically praised movie of last fall, flaunts its claim to spiritual kinship with the movies of Billy Wilder.

Conversations with Wilder
by Cameron Crowe
Knopf, 371 pp., $35

On Sunset Boulevard
The Life and Times of Billy Wilder
by Ed Sikov
Hyperion, 675 pp., $35

If the standard of greatness is having all-around skills and sustaining them over many years, then Wilder is arguably the greatest director of the sound era. Unlike Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Ernst Lubitsch, and John Ford, Wilder was both a director and a screenwriter. It's true that so were his fellow boy-wonders of the early 1940s, Orson Welles and Preston Sturges. But Wilder continued making hit movies long after the post-World War II breakup of the studio system, while the careers of the undisciplined Welles and the demoralized Sturges spiraled downward.

Wilder was a major creative influence on classic movies in three different professional modes. As a salaried studio writer, he and his partner, Charles Brackett, wrote *Ninotchka* and *Midnight*. As a writer-director in Paramount Pictures' stable, he made the first film noir, *Double Indemnity*, and *Sunset Boulevard*. And as a deal-making free agent after the demise of the studio system, he made the cross-dressing farce *Some Like It Hot* and the bittersweet *The Apartment*.

But Billy Wilder's way to the pantheon was crooked. Often too hard-bitten for the popular audiences that like movies to do their emotional work for them, he was also too straightforward for intellectual critics who don't like movies to do their interpretive work for them. Under the spell of Truffaut and the auteur school of French film theory, the prominent American critic Andrew Sarris, for example, found Wilder's slangy verbal crossfire and tight plotting too literary, insufficiently pictorial.

Because of their production costs, however, movies in Wilder's day were required to be a commercial medium—which is to say, a narrative medium. "The best *mise-en-scène* is the one you don't notice," Wilder told *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1962. "If you try to be artistic or affected you miss everything." "When somebody turns to his neighbor and says, 'My, that was beautifully directed,' we have proof that it was not," he told another interviewer.

As Sarris came to acknowledge, the French critics were ill-equipped to enjoy Wilder. His films are just too dependent on language—spicy, idiomatic American—for their pleasurable effects. Many of his best gags would be lost on non-English speakers. What could a non-English speaker like Truffaut make of *Ball of Fire*? A comic fable of crooks and lexicographers, it is a riot of period slang: "We'll be stubbin', me and the smooch, I mean the dish, I mean the mouse—you know, hit the jiggles for a little rum boogie? Brother, we're going to have some hoy toy toy!" Or the Wilder-Raymond Chandler script for *Double Indemnity*, in which a cup of coffee just needs a little rum to "get it up on its feet" and salesmen are guys "who ring doorbells and dish out a smooth line of monkey talk"? Or *The Apartment*'s famous running gag about the adverbial suffix "wise": "Premium-wise and billing-wise we are 18 percent ahead of last year, October-wise"; "That's the way it crumbles, cookie-wise"? Loses something in the translation, French-wise.

Those looking for an uplifting saga of success American-style will find it in Wilder's life after his 1934 immigration to the United States. In just a few years after his flight from Hitler, Wilder rose from being a penniless refugee to being one of the most successful men in Hollywood.

But there's little rags-to-riches optimism in his work. His characters are usually the scuttling opportunists of the jungle floor: They calculate all the angles and seize every chance and refuse to let noble sentiments stand in the way of a good thing—but still the deck is stacked against them. Wilder has often been criticized as a cold and impersonal director. Even Cameron Crowe, in his devoted *Conversations*, can't help wishing Wilder had made just one personal movie. His movies, however, may be personal in a very precise way. From the time he left home at eighteen until he landed his first job as

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UPI/Corbis-Bettmann

Jack Lemmon in The Apartment.

a Hollywood screenwriter at twenty-eight (without speaking English!), Wilder adapted to a succession of alien environments by relying on the survivor's unsentimental cunning, just as many of his characters later would.

In Sikov's account, the young Wilder of Vienna and Berlin is a hustling, street-wise, quick-witted main-chancer with an elastic moral sensibility (at least at the low-stakes moral tables) and grit and chutzpah to burn. As a young tabloid reporter in Vienna, he participated in a shakedown scheme dreamed up by the paper's shady owner, Imré Békessy. Restaurants that refused to buy ads or make payoffs were badly reviewed in its pages by, among others, young Billy Wilder. "I knew that Békessy was an unscrupulous scoundrel, but my principal worry was not to sit in judgment but to feed myself and have a roof over my head," Wilder later said. It is the survivor's creed of many a Wilder protagonist.

Later in Berlin, Wilder continued to live by his wits. He worked for a time as a dancer-gigolo, waltzing lonely old ladies around the dance floors of pricey hotels. And he got himself hired as visiting Hollywood director Allan Dwan's tour guide. Never having been outside of Berlin, Wilder memorized the Baedeker guide. At a castle in Heidelberg, he improvised a tale about a crazy Baron and a slut and was exposed—and dismissed—when Dwan overheard the prosaic truth from a nearby guide.

The director Sydney Pollack once said that the characteristic theme of American movies is "The Hero Shapes Destiny." Destiny is not so plastic in Wilder's movies, although there are exceptions, like *Sabrina* (remade by Pollack himself). Sometimes, Wilder's heroes manage to fight destiny to a draw, but more often would-be shapers of destiny come to bad ends. *Double Indemnity*'s Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray), an insurance salesman who "crooks the house," is shot to death by his partner in crime, Barbara Stanwyck's irresistible Phyllis Dietrichson. In *The Lost Weekend*, Wilder's grim tale of a mean drunk and the meek maid who loves him, the alcoholic Don Birnam (Ray Milland) swears off the sauce at the end—but who believes him? And *Ace in the Hole*'s Charles Tatum (Kirk Douglas) gets a knife in the gut.

Wilder's characteristic theme is more along the lines of "It's an Indifferent World"—full of malicious, deceitful, self-seeking predators, or, worse, insufferably sanctimonious do-gooder ginks. As Shirley MacLaine explains in *The Apartment*, in this world there are "the takers" (like the corporate shark stringing her along) and those who "get took," like herself and Jack Lemmon's C.C. "Bud" Baxter.

Wilder's America is not beautiful, but his characters are too smart to be shocked and wounded by the knowledge—unlike the protagonist in *American Beauty*, last year's self-proclaimed attempt to make a new film in the Wilder style. *American Beauty*'s narrator is named Lester Burnham, a name inspired by *The Lost Weekend*'s Don Birnam, and Burnham frames the story with opening and closing voice-over narration—a talking-corpse device appropriated from *Sunset Boulevard*, narrated by the defeated hack screenwriter Joe Gillis (William Holden).

But a last name and a toe tag are about all that Lester Burnham shares with Billy Wilder's wised-up opportunists. Lester is an alienated suburban bellyacher who is just too good for this world. Real Wilder characters do not renounce the world for the sake of moral purity. Wilder's hard-knocks heroes cannot afford the luxury of alienation and malaise. Who can, when the water is up to your neck and rising?

A pair of Wilder's films, the 1943 *Five Graves to Cairo* and the 1948 *A Foreign Affair*, might stand as bookends to Wilder's vision. *Five Graves to Cairo* is an espionage thriller set in North Africa. Mouche (Anne Baxter) is a French chambermaid at the Hotel Imperial in flyblown Sidi Halfaya, abandoned by the British during the advance of Rommel's Afrika Korps. J.J. Bramble (Franchot Tone) is the sole survivor of a British tank crew who makes his way to the seaside hotel. Once the hotel is taken over by Rommel (memorably played by the eccentric silent director Erich von Stroheim), Bramble assumes the identity of a dead bellhop—who had been spying for the Nazis—and tries to find Rommel's buried supply depots. Like *Casablanca*, *Five Graves to Cairo* weighs disillusioned self-interest against the self-sacrificing morality of wartime idealism. But it is *Casablanca* with a

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twist: Rick is a chick. Mouche's brother has been captured by the Nazis, and she beds one of Rommel's aides in exchange for his promise of help.

The conflict between Bramble's public morality and Mouche's private morality reaches its climax when Bramble—sounding pious and impersonally purple—lectures Mouche: "It's not just one brother that matters, it's a million brothers. It's not just one prison gate they might sneak open for you, it's all their gates. They must go."

"Talk," Mouche scoffs. "You talk such big words. You have a million brothers. I am small. I have only one, and I want him to live."

Mouche eventually closes ranks with Bramble and ends up a martyr to the Allied cause. (It is hard to imagine the Production Code Administration permitting less than her death.) But Mouche never repudiates her earlier accommodation with the enemy. She abandons it only after learning that her German lover had been lying about her brother's freedom. The film ends with Bramble's stirringly patriotic graveside vow to the executed chambermaid, but it is impossible to ignore Wilder's sneaking sympathy for Mouche's earlier separate peace tactics. Moral freelancers are staple Wilder characters.

If *Five Graves to Cairo*'s theme is the bending of individual wills to the discipline of war, then *Foreign Affair*'s is the inevitable unbending after the war. The film is effective in its use of the ruins of postwar Berlin: "Considering the amount of taxpayers' money that was poured on it, I don't expect it to look like a lace Valentine," says the prim and officious Republican congresswoman Phoebe Frost (Jean Arthur). Frost is on a "fact-finding" mission to expose the "moral malaria" that has the American occupation forces "soaking their feet in Moselle."

Arthur was best known for her roles in Frank Capra's populist fairy tales of the 1930s. She played cynical, big city working gals shamed back into innocence by the example of the idealistic hayseeds she falls for. In Wilder's hands, however, she is the provincial who falls for the cynic, Captain Johnny Pringle (John Lund). To win him, she must pry him away from Erika von Schluetow (Marlene Dietrich), an amoral cabaret singer who looks chic even in her first appearance, with a mouth foaming over with toothpaste.

Originally intended as a propaganda comedy, the finished film scandalized censors with its meddlesome congressmen and hypocritical military brass. And the ruins of Berlin are setup lines. "There's the balcony where [Hitler] bet his Reich would last a thousand years," says a military guide to visiting congressmen. "That's the one that broke the bookies' hearts." Black marketeering, fraternizing with the *fräuleins*—the occupying Americans have lost their "moral brakes," declares Frost, the high-minded congresswoman from the heartland.

Hyperion

Charles Brackett and Wilder, mid-1940s.

"During the war he couldn't go fast enough for you," counters Pringle. "Faster—a hundred miles per hour, twenty-four hours a day, through burning towns and down smashed autobahns. And one day the war is over, and you expect him to stop like that. Well, everybody can't stop like that. Sometimes you skid quite a piece. Sometimes you go into a spin and smash into a wall or a tree and bash your fenders and scrape those fine, shiny ideals that you brought from home."

Frost wins Johnny in the end, but it's hard to imagine who is fooled by the contrived, pro forma concession to ideological propriety. This movie is a celebration of brake trouble—and German engineering, in the shape of Dietrich's Erika, "a black market number right up there with the big boys, she was Goebbels's girl or Goering's—one of 'em." Erika is a Nazi whore, and Johnny can't keep his hands off her. "I ought to choke you a little," he says before one kiss.

Whatever the ending suggests, the gentlelady from Iowa is no match for Dietrich's "beast of Belsen," who describes her rival as "that funny little woman with a face like a scrubbed kitchen floor." The one-sided sexual competition between the female leads even spilled onto the set. Arthur, intimidated by Dietrich's self-confident glamour and sex appeal, became reclusive and even a little paranoid, accusing Dietrich of ordering Arthur's close-ups destroyed.

A Nazi, a Yank—"Oh, Johnny, what does it matter, a woman's politics?" asks Erika. "Women pick out whatever's in fashion and change it like a spring hat." The apparent intention of the line is to expose Erika's unprincipled frivolity. But in context, it is shaded with ambiguity. When one is scavenging, like Erika, for the daily necessities in a city that "looked like a great hunk of Gorgonzola cheese on which rats had been gnawing," maybe it is politics that represents frivolity.

Some critics like to see Wilder as a subverter of America's official pieties. Certainly he delighted in hazing, to name just a few targets, the prurience and herding behavior of the American press (*Ace In the Hole*), the backscratching cronyism behind the meritocratic façade of corporate life (*The Apartment*), and the creepiness of American celebrity-worship (*Kiss Me, Stupid*).

But while Wilder was a man of lightly held liberal Democratic convictions (Brackett, in contrast, was a conservative Republican), his films are untainted by the spirit of partisanship. His satirical weaponry was not deployed in the service of any particular *-ism*, other than his own brand of

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Kim Novak and Dean "Dino" Martin in Kiss Me, Stupid, *1964.*

moral realism (one conditioned, in part, by the hard, early experience of a Middle European Jew chased halfway around the world by a regime that gassed his mother in a concentration camp). And this realism saved him. While no shill for the status quo, Wilder never fell into the opposite trap of glorifying rebellion for its own sake.

In indicting the callousness and smarminess of the Hollywood power elite in *Sunset Boulevard*, a more partisan and less morally realistic filmmaker might well have made Joe Gillis a dreary martyr to Art in its conflict with Commerce. Hollywood eats Gillis alive: The yes-men at Metro say no to him, and his agent is "in Bel Air making with the golf sticks" instead of "digging up a job for poor Joe Gillis." But there is little evidence that poor Joe Gillis's poor talents entitle him to more. After all, the script Gillis pitches is about a rookie shortstop who once ran afoul of the law, "but he's tryin' to go straight"—and, guess what, now the mob wants him to throw the World Series! Gillis's problem is not that he can't sell a good script. It's that he can't write one.

Wilder's refusal to romanticize the anti-hero is all the more commendable in context. After all, it was in the postwar years that the cult of Rebel Worship first swept Hollywood, in a series of marble-mouthed and vaguely anti-establishment passion plays of youthful malaise, alienation, and rebellion starring the likes of Marlon Brando and James Dean. Movies like *The Wild One* and *Rebel Without a Cause* are today period artifacts. Wilder during the same period was making enduring dark comedies.

Unlike Preston Sturges, who tumbled swiftly from his peak, or Ernst Lubitsch, who died at fifty-four, Wilder kept making movies long after cultural tastes had begun to shift against him. And there was no crueler time in which to find oneself passé in the American entertainment world than the fast-forwarding, gerontophobic 1960s. For the first time in his long and successful Hollywood career, Wilder began to suffer public neglect and critical hostility. And, perhaps in response, his movies grew meaner. Wilder seemed to be, in a phrase from *Sunset Boulevard*, "taking it out on the world" because he had "been given the go-by."

After winning writer, director, and best picture Oscars for *The Apartment* (1960), Wilder made another nine movies, beginning with *One, Two, Three*. Only *Irma la Douce* (1963) was a hit. Most were outright failures—and maddeningly repetitive in their faults. They are often leering, filled with busty blonde sluts and the gropey old goats who clutch at them. Laziness and cronyism afflict the casting (for example, Wilder crony Cliff Osmond, an untalented nobody, turns up again and again in the late movies). The jokes have the crankily editorial feel of an old man yelling at his copy of the *New York Times*. And above all, the late Wilder movies are way too long.

Some critics have tried to make a case for *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and *Avanti!* as mature classics, but that's an insult to maturity—and Wilder in his prime. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, some have hailed *One, Two, Three* for prescience in foreshadowing the seduction of the East by the consumerism of the West. But despite breakneck pacing and a commanding James Cagney as a can-do Coca-Cola executive, the movie is warmed-over Wilder. The East meets West comedy, the heel-clicking-Hun jokes, the cross-dressing gag—Wilder had done it all before, better, in *Ninotchka*, *Stalag 17*, and *Some Like It Hot*.

Kiss Me, Stupid might have been great, in its dingy way, if only original star Peter Sellers had not driven everyone on the set nuts, then had a heart attack and left the picture. It is the story of a small-town hack songwriter, Orville Spooner (Ray Walston), who serves up his (fake) wife (Kim Novak) to big-time crooner "Dino" (Dean Martin parodying himself and stealing the picture). Somehow, the tale grows sweeter the uglier it gets (ugly enough to receive a "C-condemned" from the Legion of Decency and be widely boycotted). But still, *Kiss Me, Stupid* can't survive the inexplicably demented performance of Walston, Sellers's last-minute replacement, as Orville.

Wilder's anxieties about shifting popular tastes begin to show up in his scripts of this period, often in the form of (mostly lame) gibes at rock-and-roll. But in *Kiss Me, Stupid*, Martin's self-deprecating shtick ("I sing better than all of [the Beatles] put together, and I'm younger—than all of 'em put together") gives poignant expression to Wilder's own fears of becoming a wise-cracking dinosaur in an earnest, turned-on America.

One can regret that Wilder, an immigrant success story if ever there was one, so seldom celebrated the freedom and opportunity available in his adopted land. But remember that the same skeptical temperament that constrained him from creating moist-eyed panegyrics to his adopted land also constrained him from indulging himself in the equally sentimental beatification of the rebel. ♦

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Secretary Riley Reignites the Math Wars

Bill Evers is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

In early 1998, U.S. secretary of education Richard W. Riley called for a "cease-fire" in the math wars between the proponents of solid content and the proponents of discovery-learning methods. He said he was "very troubled" by "the increasing polarization and fighting" about how and which mathematics should be taught from kindergarten through high school.

Despite this call for a cease-fire, the U.S. Department of Education endorsed ten discovery-learning programs in October 1999. This federal imprimatur should not be allowed to disguise the fact that content (such as dividing fractions and multiplying multidigit numbers) is missing from these federally approved programs and that there is no good evidence that they are effective. Discovery-learning math is often called by its critics "fuzzy math" or "no-correct-answer math."

In response to the Department of Education, about two hundred mathematicians and scientists signed an open letter to Secretary Riley, which was published in the *Washington Post* on November 18, 1999 (see letter at www.mathematicallycorrect.com/riley.htm). The signers, who included Nobel laureates and some of the country's most eminent mathematicians, didn't like the Department of Education's new equation: Federal Math = Fuzzy Math. The letter asked Riley to withdraw the federal endorsements. The news stories that followed got at the essence of the debate.

Steve Leinward of the Connecticut Department of Education was on the U.S. Department of Education's panel that picked the math programs that would receive federal approval. In an interview with the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Leinward defended the approved programs as the least common denominator—"a common core of math that all students can master."

Leinward is not saying that the federally approved programs cover the material taught in top-performing countries such as Japan or Hungary or that the programs contain complete coverage of elementary and secondary school math. What he and his fellow panelists want is a watered-down program that all American students—as currently trained—can master.

Mathematics professor David Klein of California State University at Northridge is a proponent of solid content. He is quoted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as saying that algebra is the key course for students, the gateway to success in mathematics and to success in college in general. Leinward says that Klein's algebra-for-all position is elitist.

Here we have the central difference between the two sides. The rigorous curriculum side says that, like Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore, we can have algebra for all, preparing students for technical careers and college-level work. The water-it-down side says U.S. teachers and students aren't capable of teaching and learning algebra.

These federal recommendations are for kindergarten through high school, which has serious consequences. In essence, the U.S. Department of Education, by making these endorsements, is closing the gate on going to college or even on technical blue-collar jobs for many students. And it is closing that gate as early as kindergarten.

This whole controversy was born in bureaucratic overreach. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 forbids federally determined curricula. The U.S. Constitution doesn't authorize it, and the results have been harmful and foolish.

— Bill Evers

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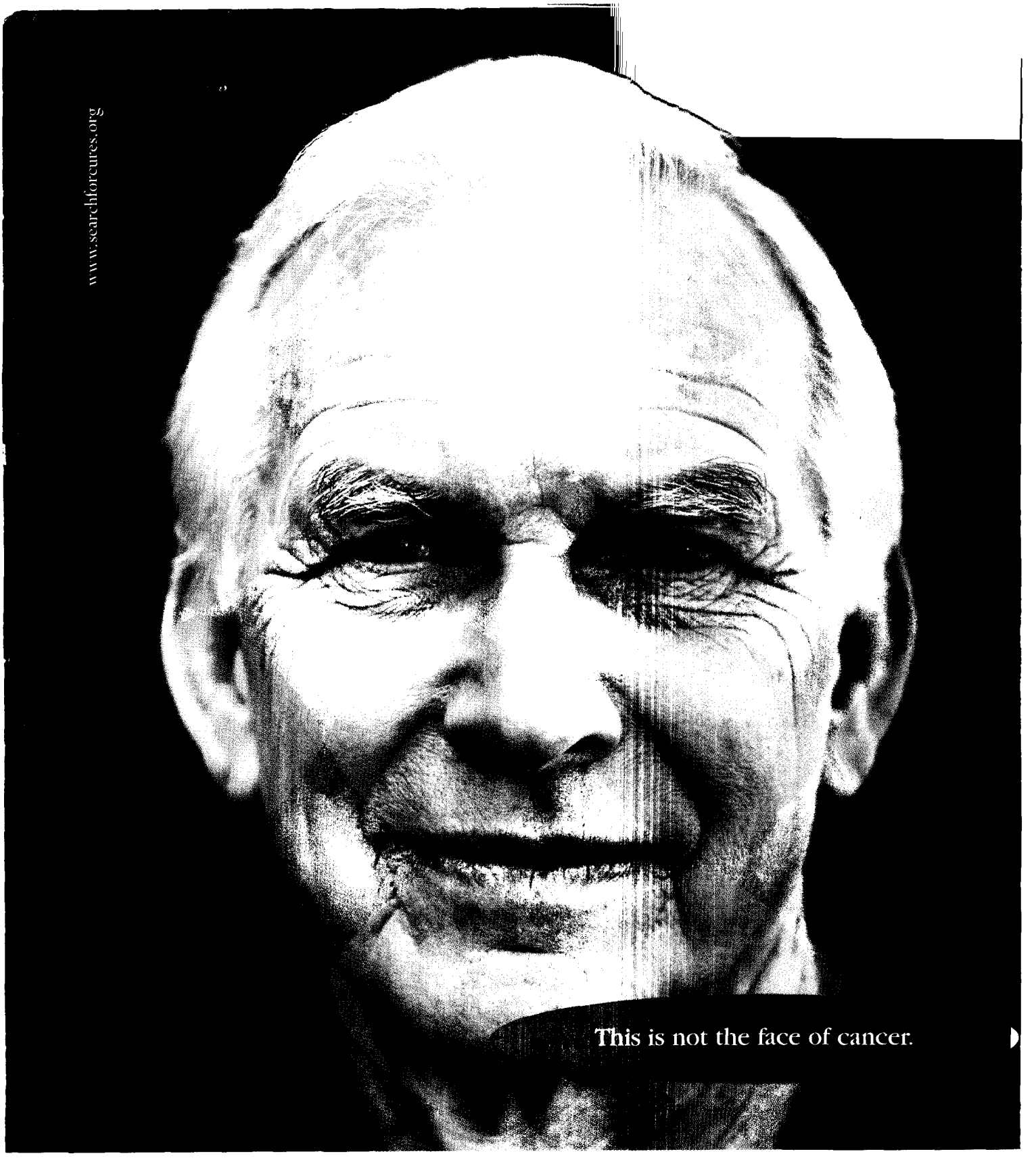

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